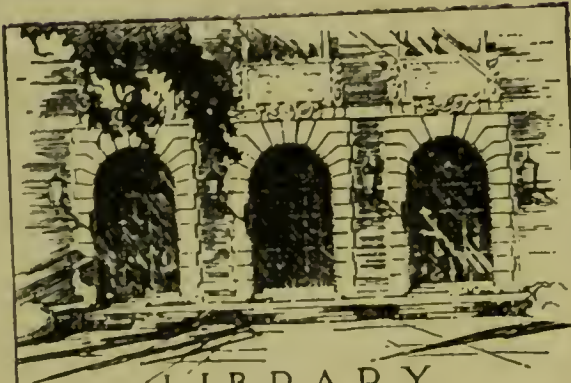






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BEVIS.

LONDON :
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ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.

BEVIS

THE STORY OF A BOY

BY

RICHARD JEFFERIES,

AUTHOR OF "THE GAMEKEEPER AT HOME," "WILD LIFE IN A
SOUTHERN COUNTY," "THE AMATEUR POACHER," "GREENE
FERNE FARM," "HODGE AND HIS MASTERS," "ROUND
ABOUT A GREAT ESTATE," "WOOD MAGIC."

"But natures of the noblest frame
These toyles and dangers please;
And they take comfort in the same,
As much as you in ease."
Ulysses and the Syren.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

London :

SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON,
CROWN BUILDINGS, 188, FLEET STREET.

1882.

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TO

JESSIE, HAROLD, AND PHYLLIS.

For Rev. Prof. 15 Aug 82 Chellett = 30- Macy 6053

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BEVIS.



CHAPTER I.

BEVIS AT WORK.

ONE morning a large wooden case was brought to the farmhouse, and Bevis, impatient to see what was in it, ran for the hard chisel and the hammer, and would not consent to put off the work of undoing it for a moment. It must be done directly. The case was very broad and nearly square, but only a few inches deep, and was formed of thin boards. They placed it for him upon the floor, and, kneeling down, he tapped the chisel, driving the edge in under the lid, and so starting the nails. Twice he hit his fingers in his haste, once so hard that he dropped the hammer, but he picked it up again and went on as before, till he had loosened the lid all round.

After labouring like this, and bruising his finger, Bevis was disappointed to find that the case only contained a picture which might look very well, but was of no use to him. It was a fine engraving of "An English Merry-making in the Olden Time," and was soon hoisted up and slung to the wall. Bevis claimed the case as his perquisite, and began to meditate what he could do with it. It was dragged from the house into one of the sheds for him, and he fetched the hammer and his own special little hatchet, for his first idea was to split up the boards. Deal splits so easily, it is a pleasure to feel the fibres part, but upon consideration he thought it might do for the roof of a hut, if he could fix it on four stakes, one at each corner.

Away he went with his hatchet down to the withy-bed by the brook (where he intended to build the hut) to cut some stakes and get them ready. The brook made a sharp turn round the withy-bed, enclosing a tongue of ground which was called in the house at home the Peninsula, because of its shape and being surrounded on three sides by water. This piece of land, which was not all withy, but partly open and partly copse, was Bevis's own territory, his own peculiar property, over which he was autocrat and king.

He flew at once to attack a little fir, and struck it with the hatchet: the first blow cut through the bark and left a "blaze," but the second did not produce anything like so much effect, the third, too, rebounded, though the tree shook to its top. Bevis hit it a fourth time, not at all pleased that the fir would not cut more easily, and then, fancying he saw something floating down the stream, dropped his hatchet and went to the edge to see.

It was a large fly struggling aimlessly, and as it was carried past a spot where the bank overhung and the grasses drooped into the water, a fish rose and took it, only leaving just the least circle of wavelet. Next came a dead dry twig, which a wood-pigeon had knocked off with his strong wings as he rose out of the willow-top where his nest was. The little piece of wood stayed a while in the hollow where the brook had worn away the bank, and under which was a deep hole; there the current lingered, then it moved quicker, till, reaching a place where the channel was narrower, it began to rush and rotate, and shot past a long green flag bent down, which ceaselessly fluttered in the swift water. Bevis took out his knife and began to cut a stick to make a toy boat, and then, throwing it down, wished he had a canoe to go floating along the stream and

shooting over the bay ; then he looked up the brook at the old pollard willow he once tried to chop down for that purpose.

The old pollard was hollow, large enough for him to stand inside on the soft, crumbling "touchwood," and it seemed quite dead, though there were green rods on the top, yet it was so hard he could not do much with it, and wearied his arm to no purpose. Besides, since he had grown bigger he had thought it over, and considered that even if he burnt the tree down with fire, as he had half a mind to do, having read that that was the manner of the savages in wild countries, still he would have to stop up both ends with board, and he was afraid that he could not make it water-tight.

And it was only the same reason that stayed his hand from barking an oak or a beech to make a canoe of the bark, remembering that if he got the bark off in one piece the ends would be open and it would not float properly. He knew how to bark a tree quite well, having helped the woodmen when the oaks were thrown, and he could have carried the short ladder out and so cut it high enough up the trunk (while the tree stood). But the open ends puzzled him ; nor could he understand nor get any one to explain to him how the wild men, if they

used canoes like this, kept the water out at the end.

Once, too, he took the gouge and the largest chisel from the workshop, and the mallet with the beech-wood head, and set to work to dig out a boat from a vast trunk of elm thrown long since, and lying outside the rick-yard, whither it had been drawn under the timber-carriage. Now, the bark had fallen off this piece of timber from decay, and the surface of the wood was scored and channelled by insects which had eaten their way along it. But though these little creatures had had no difficulty, Bevis with his gouge and his chisel and his mallet could make very little impression, and though he chipped out pieces very happily for half an hour, he had only formed a small hole. So that would not do; he left it, and the first shower filled the hole he had cut with water, and how the savages dug out their canoes with flint choppers he could not think, for he could not cut off a willow twig with the sharpest splinter he could find.

Of course he knew perfectly well that boats are built of plank, but if you try to build one you do not find it so easy; the planks are not to be fitted together by just thinking you will do it. That was more difficult to him than gouging out the huge elm

trunk ; Bevis could hardly smooth two planks to come together tight at the edge or even to overlap, nor could he bend them up at the end, and altogether it was a very cross-grained piece of work this making a boat.

Pan: the spaniel, sat down on the hard, dry, beaten earth of the workshop, and looked at Bevis puzzling over his plane and his pencil, his footrule, and the paper on which he had sketched his model ; then up at Bevis's forehead, frowning over the trouble of it ; next Pan curled round and began to bite himself for fleas, pushing up his nostril and snuffling and raging over them. No. This would not do ; Bevis could not wait long enough ; Bevis liked the sunshine and the grass under foot. Crash fell the plank and bang went the hammer as he flung it on the bench, and away they tore out into the field, the spaniel rolling in the grass, the boy kicking up the tall dandelions, catching the yellow disk under the toe of his boot and driving it up in the air.

But though thrown aside like the hammer, still the idea slumbered in his mind, and as Bevis stood by the brook, looking across at the old willow, and wishing he had a boat, all at once he thought what a capital raft the picture packing-case would make ! The case was much larger than the picture

which came in it ; it had not perhaps been originally intended for that engraving. It was broad and flat ; it had low sides ; it would not be water-tight, but perhaps he could make it—yes, it was just the very thing. He would float down the brook on it ; perhaps he would cross the Longpond.

Like the wind he raced back home, up the meadow, through the garden, past the carthouse to the shed where he had left the case. He tilted it up against one of the uprights or pillars of the shed, and then stooped to see if daylight was visible anywhere between the planks. There were many streaks of light, chinks which must be caulked, where they did not fit. In the workshop there was a good heap of tow ; he fetched it, and immediately began to stuff it in the openings with his pocket-knife. Some of the chinks were so wide, he filled them up with chips of wood, with the tow round the chips, so as to wedge tightly.

The pocket-knife did not answer well. He got a chisel, but that cut the tow, and was also too thick ; then he thought of an old table-knife he had seen lying on the garden wall, left there by the man who had been set to weed the path with it. This did much better, but it was tedious work, very tedious work ; he was obliged to leave it twice—once to have

a swing, and stretch himself; the second time to get a hunch, or cog, as he called it, of bread and butter. He worked so hard he was so hungry. Round the loaf there were indentations, like a cogged wheel, such as the millwright made. He had one of these cogs of bread cut out, and well stuck over with pats of fresh butter, just made and fresh from the churn, not yet moulded and rolled into shape, a trifle salt but delicious.

Then on again, thrusting the tow in with the knife, till he had used it all, and still there were a few chinks open. He thought he would get some oakum by picking a bit of rope to pieces: there was no old rope about, so he took out his pocket-knife, and stole into the waggon-house, where, first looking round to be sure that no one was about, he slashed at the end of a cart-line. The thick rope was very hard, and it was difficult to cut it; it was twisted so tight, and the rain and the sun had toughened it besides, while the surface was case-hardened by rubbing against the straw of the loads it had bound. He haggled it off at last, but when he tried to pick it to pieces he found the larger strands unwound tolerably well, but to divide them and part the fibres was so wearisome and so difficult that he did not know how to manage it. With a nail he hacked at it, and got

quite red in the face, but the tough rope was not to be torn to fragments in a minute ; he flung it down, then he recollected some one would see it, so he hurled it over the hedge into the lane.

He ran indoors to see if he could find anything that would do instead, and went up into the bench-room where there was another carpenter's bench (put up for amateur work), and hastily turned over everything ; then he pulled out the drawer in his mamma's room, the drawer in which she kept odds and ends, and having upset everything, and mixed her treasures, he lighted on some rag which she kept always ready to bind round the fingers that used to get cut so often. For a makeshift this, he thought, would do. He tore a long piece, left the drawer open, and ran to the shed with it. There was enough to fill the last chink he could see ; so it was done. But it was a hundred and twenty yards to the brook, and though he could lift the case on one side at a time, he could not carry it.

He sat down on the stool (dragged out from the workshop) to think ; why of course he would fasten a rope to it, and so haul it along ! Looking for a nail in the nail-box on the bench, for the rope must be tied to something, he saw a staple which would do much better than a nail, so he bored two holes

with a gimlet, and drove the staple into the raft. There was a cord in the summer-house by the swing, which he used for a lasso—he had made a running noose, and could throw it over anything or anybody who would keep still—this he fetched, and put through the staple. With the cord over his shoulder he dragged the raft by main force out of the shed, across the hard, dry ground, through the gate, and into the field. It came very hard, but it did come, and he thought he should do it.

The grass close to the rails was not long, and the load slipped rather better on it, but farther out into the field it was longer, and the edge of the case began to catch against it, and when he came to the furrows it was as much as he could manage, first to get it down into the furrow, next to lift it up a little, else it would not move, and then to pull it up the slope. By stopping a while and then hauling he moved it across three of the furrows, but now the cord quite hurt his shoulder, and had begun to fray his jacket. When he looked back he was about thirty yards from where he had started, not half-way to the gateway, through which was another meadow, where the mowing grass was still higher.

Bevis sat down on the sward to rest, his face all hot with pulling, and almost thought he should never

do it. There was a trail in the grass behind where the raft had passed like that left by a chain harrow. It wanted something to slip on; perhaps rollers would do like those they moved the great pieces of timber on to the saw-pit. As soon as he had got his breath again, Bevis went back to the shed, and searched round for some rollers. He could not find any wood ready that would do, but there was a heap of poles close by. He chose a large, round willow one, carried the stool down to it, got the end up on the stool, and worked away like a slave till he had sawn off three lengths.

These he took to the raft, put one under the front part, and arranged the other two a little way ahead. Next, having brought a stout stake from the shed, he began to lever the raft along, and was delighted at the ease with which it now moved. But this was only on the level ground and down the slope of the next furrow, so far it went very well, but there was a difficulty in getting it up the rise. As the grass grew longer, too, the rollers would not roll; and quite tired out with all this work, Bevis flung down his lever, and thought he would go indoors and sit down and play at something else.

First he stepped into the kitchen, as the door was open; it was a step down to it. The low white-

washed ceiling and the beam across it glowed red from the roasting-fire of logs split in four, and built up on the hearth; the flames rushed up the vast, broad chimney—a bundle of flames a yard high, whose tips parted from the main tongues and rose disjointed for a moment by themselves: the tiny panes of yellowish-green glass, too, in the window reflected the light. Such a fire as makes one's lips moist at the thought of the juicy meats and the subtle sweetness imparted by the wood fuel, which has a volatile fragrance of its own. Bevis thought he would get the old iron spoon, and melt some lead, and cast some bullets in the mould—he had a mould, though they would not let him have a pistol—he knew where there was a piece of lead-pipe, and a battered bit of guttering that came off the house.

Or else he would put in a nail, make it white hot, and hammer it into an arrowhead, using the wrought-iron fire-dog as an anvil. The heat was so great, especially as it was a warm May day, that before he could decide he was obliged to go out of the kitchen, and so wandered into the sitting-room. His fishing-rod stood in the corner where he had left it; he had brought it in because the second joint was splitting, and he intended (as the ferrule was lost)

to bind it round and round with copper wire. But he did not feel much inclined to do that either; he had half a mind to go up in the bench-room, and take the lock of the old gun to pieces to see how it worked. Only the stock (with the lock attached) was left; the barrel was gone.

While he was thinking he walked into the parlour, and seeing the bookcase open—the door was lined within with green material—put his hand involuntarily on an old grey book. The covers were grey and worn and loose; the back part had come off; the edges were rough and difficult to turn over, because they had not been cut by machinery; the margin, too, was yellow and frayed. Bevis's fingers went direct to the rhyme he had read so often, and in an instant everything around him disappeared, room and bookcase and the garden without, and he forgot himself, for he could see the “bolde men in their deeds,” he could hear the harper and the minstrel's song, the sound of trumpet and the clash of steel; how—

“As they were drinking ale and wine
Within Kyng Estmere's halle:
When will ye marry a wyfe, brother,
A wyfe to glad us all?”

How the kyng and “Adler younge” rode to the

woeing, and the fight they had, fighting so courageously against crowds of enemies,—

“That soone they have slayne the Kempery men,
Or forst them forth to flee.”

Bevis put himself so into it, that he did it all, *he* bribed the porter, *he* played the harp, and drew the sword; these were no words to him, it was a living picture in which he himself acted.

He was inclined to go up into the garret and fetch down the old cutlass that was there among the lumber, and go forth into the meadow and slash away at “gix” and parsley and burdocks, and kill them all for Kempery men, just as he cut them down before when he was St. George. As he was starting for the cutlass he recollected that the burdocks and the rest where not up high enough yet, the Paynim scoundrels had not grown tall enough in May to be slain with any pleasure, and a sense that you were valiantly swording. Still there was an old wooden bedstead up there, on which he could hoist up a sail, and sail away to any port he chose, to Spain, or Rhodes, or where the lotus-eaters lived. But his mind, so soon as he had put down the grey book, ran still on his raft, and out he raced to see it again, fresh and bright from the rest of leaving it alone a little while.

CHAPTER II.

THE LAUNCH.

As he came near a butterfly rose from the raft, having stayed a moment to see what this could be among the dandelions and buttercups, but Bevis was too deeply occupied to notice it. The cord was of no use; the rollers were of no use; the wheelbarrow occurred to him, but he could not lift it on, besides it was too large, nor could he have moved it if it would go on. Pan was not strong enough to help him haul, even if he would submit to be harnessed, which was doubtful. The cart-horses were all out at work, nor indeed had they been in the stable would he have dared to touch them.

What he wanted to do was to launch his raft before any one saw or guessed what he was about, so that it might be a surprise to them and a triumph to him. Especially he was anxious to do it before

Mark came; he might come across the fields any minute, or along the road, and Bevis wished to be afloat, so that Mark might admire his boat, and ask permission to step on board. Mark might appear directly; it was odd he had not heard his whistle before. Full of this thought away went Bevis back to the house, to ask Polly the dairymaid to help him; but she hunted him out with the mop, being particularly busy that day with the butter, and quite deaf to all his offers and promises. As he came out he looked up the field, and remembered that John was stopping the gaps, and was at work by himself that day; perhaps he would slip away and help him.

He raced up the meadow and found the labourer, with his thick white leather gloves and billhook, putting thorn bushes in the gaps, which no one had made so much as Bevis himself.

“Come and help me,” said Bevis. Now John was willing enough to leave his work and help Bevis do anything—for anything is sweeter than the work you ought to do—besides which he knew he could get Bevis to bring him out a huge mug of ale for it.

But he grinned and said nothing, and simply pointed through the hedge. Bevis looked, and there

was the Bailiff with his back against the great oak, under which he once went to sleep. The Bailiff was older now, much older, and though he was so stout and big he did not do much work with his hands. He stood there, leaning his back against the oak, with his hazel staff in his hand, watching the stone-pickers, who were gathering up the bits of broken earthenware and rubbish from among the cowslips out of the way of the scythe; watching, too, the plough yonder in the arable field beyond; and with his eyes now and then on John. While those grey eyes were about, work, you may be sure, was not slack. So Bevis pouted, and picked up a stone, and threw it at the Bailiff, taking good care, however, not to hit him. The stone fell in the hedge behind the Bailiff, and made him start, as he could not think what creature it could be, for rabbits and weasels and other animals and birds move as silently as possible, and this made a sharp tap.

Bevis returned slowly down the meadow, and as he came near the house, having now given up hope of getting the raft to the brook, he caught sight of a cart-horse outside the stable. He ran and found the carter's lad, who had been sent home with the horse; the horse had been hauling small pieces of timber out of the mowing-grass with a chain,

and the lad was just going to take off the harness.

“Stop,” said Bevis, “stop directly, and hitch the chain on my raft.”

The boy hesitated; he dared not disobey the carter, and he had been in trouble for pleasing Bevis before.

“This instant,” said Bevis, stamping his foot; “I’m your master.”

“No; that you beant,” said the boy slowly, very particular as to facts; “your feyther be my master.”

“You do it this minute,” said Bevis, hot in the face, “or I’ll *kill* you; but if you’ll do it I’ll give you—sixpence.”

The boy still hesitated, but he grinned; then he looked round, then he turned the horse’s head—unwilling, for the animal thought he was going to the manger—and did as Bevis told him. Behind the strong cart-horse the raft was nothing, it left a trail all across the grass right down to the brook; Bevis led the way to the drinking-place, where the ground sloped to the water. The boy once embarked in the business, worked with a will—highly delighted himself with the idea—and he and Bevis together pushed the raft into the stream.

“Now you hold the rope,” said Bevis, “while I get in,” and he put one foot on the raft.

Just then there came a whistle, first a long low call, then a quaver, then two short calls repeated.

“That’s Mark,” said Bevis, and in he hastened. “Push me off,” for one edge of the raft touched the sandy shore.

“Holloa!” shouted Mark, racing down the meadow from the gateway; “stop a minute! let me!—”

“Push,” said Bevis.

The boy shoved the raft off; it floated very well, but the moment it was free of the ground and Bevis’s weight had to be entirely supported, the water squirted in around the edges.

“You’ll be drowned,” said the carter’s lad.

“Pooh!” said Bevis.

“I shall jump in,” said Mark, making as if he were about to leap.

“If you do I’ll hit you,” said Bevis, doubling his fists; “I say!—”

For the water rushed in rapidly, and was already half an inch deep. When he caulked his vessel, he stopped all the seams of the bottom, but he had overlooked the chinks round the edges, between the narrow planks that formed the gunwales or

sides, and the bottom to which they were fastened.

Bevis moved towards the driest side of the raft, but directly he stepped there and depressed it with his weight the water rushed after him, and he was deeper than ever in it. It came even over his boots.

“Let I get in,” said the boy; “mine be water-tights.”

“Pull me back,” said Bevis.

Mark seized the rope, and he and the boy gave such a tug that Bevis, thrown off his balance, must have fallen into the brook had he not jumped ashore and escaped with one foot wet through to the ankle.

“Yaa—you!” they heard a rough voice growling, like a dog muttering a bark in his throat, and instantly the carter’s lad felt a grip on the back of his neck. It was the Bailiff who marched him up the meadow, holding the boy by the neck with one hand and leading the cart-horse with the other. Bevis and Mark were too full of the raft even to notice that their assistant had been haled off.

First they pulled till they had got it ashore; then they tilted it up to let the water run out; then they examined the chinks where it had come in.

“Here’s my handkerchief,” said Mark; “put that in.”

The handkerchief, a very dirty one, was torn into shreds and forced into the chinks. It was not enough, so Bevis tore up his; still there were holes. Bevis roamed up and down the grass in his excitement, gazing round for something to stop these leaks.

“I know,” said he suddenly, “moss will do. Come on.”

He made for a part of the meadow much overshadowed by trees, where the moss threatened to overcome the grass altogether, so well did it flourish in the coolness and moisture, for the dew never dried there even at noonday. The Bailiff had it torn up by the harrow, but it was no good, it would grow. Bevis always got moss from here to put in his tin can for the worms when he went fishing. Mark was close behind him, and together they soon had a quantity of moss. After they had filled the chinks as they thought, they tried the boat again, Bevis insisting on his right to get in first as it was his property. But it still leaked, so they drew it out once more and again caulked the seams. To make it quite tight Bevis determined to put some clay as well, to line the chinks with it like putty.

So they had to go home to the garden, get the trowel out of the summer-house where Bevis kept such things, and then dig a few lumps of clay out of the mound.

There was only one place where there was any clay accessible, they knew the spot well—was there anything they did not know? Working up the lumps of clay with their hands and the water so as to soften and render it plastic, they carefully lined the chinks, and found when they launched the raft that this time it floated well and did not admit a single drop. For the third time, Bevis stepped on board, balancing himself with a pole he had brought down from the garden, for he had found before that it was difficult to stand upright on a small raft. Mark pushed him off: Bevis kept one end of the pole touching the bottom, and so managed very well. He guided the raft out of the drinking-place, which was like a little pond beside the brook, and into the stream.

There the current took it, and all he had to do was to keep it from grounding on the shallows, where the flags were rising out of the mud, or striking against the steep banks where the cow-slips overhung the water. With his feet somewhat apart to stand the firmer, his brow frowning (with

resolution), and the pole tight in his hands—all grimed with clay—Bevis floated slowly down the stream. The sun shone hot and bright, and he had of course left his hat on the sward where it had fallen off as he stooped to the caulking: the wind blew and lifted his hair: his feet were wet. But he never noticed the heat, nor the wind, nor his wet feet, nor his clayey hands. He had done it—he was quite lost in his raft.

Round the bend the brook floated him gently, past the willow where the wood-pigeon built (he was afraid to come near his nest while they were about), past the thick hawthorn bushes white with may-bloom, under which the blackbirds love to stay in the hottest days in the cool shadow by the water. Where there were streaks of white sand sifted by the stream from the mud, he could see the bottom: under the high bank there was a swirl as if the water wrestled with something under the surface: a water-rat, which had watched him coming from a tiny terrace, dived with a sound like a stone dropped quietly in: the stalks of flags grazed the bottom of the raft, he could hear them as it drew on: a jack struck and rushed wildly up and down till he found a way to slip by; the raft gave a heave and shot swiftly forward where there

had once been a bay and was still a fall of two inches or so: a bush projected so much that he could with difficulty hold the boughs aside and prevent the thorns from scratching his face: a snag scraped the bottom of the boat and the jerk nearly overthrew him—he did not mind that, he feared lest the old stump had started a seam, but fortunately it had not done so.

Then there was a straight course, a broad and open reach, at which he shouted with delight. The wind came behind and pushed his back like a sail and the little silvery ripples ran before him, and dashed against the shore, destroying themselves and their shadows under them at the same time. The raft floated without piloting here, steadily on. Bevis lifted his pole and waved his hand in triumph.

From the gateway the carter's lad watched him; he had got away from the angry Bailiff. From the garden ha-ha, near the rhubarb patch, Polly the dairymaid watched him, gesticulating every now and then with her arms, for she had been sent to call him to dinner. Mark, wild with envy and admiration and desire to share the voyage, walked on the bank, begging to come in, for Bevis to get out or let him join him, threatening to leap aboard from the high bank where the current drifted the raft

right under him, pulling off his shoes and stockings to wade in and seize the craft by main force ; then, changing his mind, shouting to Bevis to mind a boulder in the brook, and pointing out the place.

The raft swept with steady, easy motion down the straight broad reach ; Bevis did not need his pole, he stood without its help, all aglow with joy.

The raft came to another bend, and Bevis with his pole guided it round, and then, looking up, stamped his foot with vexation, for there was an ancient, hollow willow right in front, so bowed down that its head obstructed the fair way of the stream. He had quite hoped to get down to the Peninsula, and to circumnavigate it, and even shoot the cataract of the dam below, and go under the arch of the bridge, and away yet farther. He was not fifty yards from the Peninsula, and Mark had run there to meet him ; but here was this awkward tree, and before he could make up his mind what to do, bump the raft struck the willow, then it swung slowly round and one side grounded on the bank, and he was at a standstill.

He hit the willow with his pole, but that was of no use, and called to Mark. Bevis pushed the willow with his pole, Mark pulled at a branch, and together they could shake it, but they could not move it out

of the way; the stream was blocked as if a boom had been fastened across it. The voyage was over.

While they consulted, Polly came down, having failed to make them hear from the garden, and after she had shook them each by the shoulder brought them to reason. Though she would have failed in that too had not the willow been there, not for dinner or anything would Bevis have abandoned his adventure, so bent was he always on the business he had in hand.

But the willow was obstinate, they could not get past it, so reluctantly he agreed to go home. First Polly had to fetch his hat, which was two hundred yards away on the grass by the drinking-place; then Mark had to put his shoes and stockings on, and take one off again because there was a fragment of stone in it. Next, Bevis had to step into the raft again—a difficult thing to do from the tree—in order to get the cord fastened to the staple to tie it up, not that there was the least risk of the raft floating away, still these things, as you know, ought to be done quite properly.

After he had tied the cord or painter to a branch of the willow as firmly as possible, at last he consented to come. But then catching sight of the

carter's lad, he had first to give him his sixpence, and also to tell him that if he dared go near the raft, even to look at it, he would be put in the brook. Besides which he had to wash his hands, and by the time Mark and he reached the table the rest had finished. The people looked at them rather blackly, but they did not mind or notice in the least, for their minds were full of projects to remove the willow, about which they whispered to each other.

Pan raced beside them after dinner to the ha-ha wall, down which they jumped one after the other into the meadow. The spaniel hesitated on the brink, not that he feared the leap, which he had so often taken, but reflection checked him. He watched them a little way as they ran for the brook, then turned and walked very slowly back to the house ; for he knew that now dinner was over, if he waited till he was remembered, a plateful would come out for him.

CHAPTER III.

THE MISSISSIPPI.

THEY found the raft as they had left it, except that petals of the may-bloom, shaken from the hawthorn bushes by the breeze, as they came floating down the stream had lodged against the vessel like a white line on the water. Already, too, the roach, which love a broad shadow to play about its edge, had come underneath, but when they felt the shaking of the bank from the footsteps turned aside, and let the current drift them down. Bevis fetched his hatchet from the Peninsula and began to hack at the willow; Mark, not without some difficulty, got leave to climb into the raft, and sit in the centre. The chips flew, some fell on the grass, some splashed into the brook; Bevis made a broad notch just as he had seen the men do it; and though his arm was slender, the fire behind it drove the edge of the steel into the wood. The willow shook, and its branches, which touched the water, ruffled the surface.

But though the trunk was hollow it was a long way through, and when Bevis began to tire he had only cut in about three inches. Then Mark had to work, but before he had given ten strokes Bevis said it was of no use chopping, they could never do it, they must get the grub-axe. So they went back to the house, and carried the ungainly tool down to the tree.

It was too cumbrous for them, they pecked up a little turf, and just disturbed the earth, and then threw the clumsy thing on the grass. Next they thought of the great saw—the cross-cut—the men used, one at each end, to saw through timber; but that was out of their reach, purposely put up high in the workshop, so that they should not meddle with it or cut themselves with its terrible teeth.

“I know,” said Mark, “we must make a fire, and burn the tree; we are savages, you know, and that is how they do it.”

“How silly you are!” said Bevis. “We are *not* savages, and I shall not play at that. We have just discovered this river, and we are going down it on our raft; and if we do not reach some place to-night and build a fort, very likely the savages will shoot us. I believe I heard one shouting just now; there was something rustled, I am sure, in the forest.”

He pointed at the thick double mound hedge about a hundred yards distant.

“What river is it?” said Mark. “Is it the Amazon, or the Congo, or the Yellow River, or the Nile—”

“It is the Mississippi, of course,” said Bevis, quite decided and at ease as to that point. “Can’t you see that piece of weed there. My papa says that weed came from America, so I am sure it is the Mississippi, and nobody has ever floated down it before, and there’s no one that can read within a thousand miles.”

“Then what shall we do?”

“O, there’s always something you can do. If we could only get a beaver now to nibble through it. There’s always something you can do. I know,” and Bevis jumped up delighted at his idea, “we can bore a hole, and blow it up with gunpowder!”

“Let us fetch an auger,” said Mark. “The gimlet is not big enough.”

“Be quick,” said Bevis. “Run back to the settlement, and get the auger; I will mind the raft and keep off the savages; and, I say, bring a spear and the cutlass; and—I say—”

But Mark was too far, and in too much of a hurry to hear a word. Bevis, tired of chopping, rolled

over on his back on the grass, looking up at the sky. The buttercups rose high above his head, the wind blew and cooled his heated forehead, and a humble-bee hummed along: borne by the breeze from the grass there came the sweet scent of green things growing in the sunshine. Far up he saw the swallows climbing in the air; they climbed a good way almost straight up, and then suddenly came slanting down again.

While he lay there he distinctly heard the Indians rustling again in the forest. He raised himself on one arm, but could not see them; then recollecting that he must try to conceal himself, he reclined again, and thought how he should be able to repel an attack without weapons. There was the little hatchet, he could snatch up that and defend himself. Perhaps they would sink the raft? Perhaps when Mark returned they had better tow it back up stream, and draw it ashore safely at home, and then return to the work of clearing the obstruction. As he lay with his knees up among the buttercups he heard the thump, thump of Mark's feet rushing down the hill in eager haste with the auger. So he sat up, and beckoned to him to be quiet, and explained to him when he arrived that the Indians were certainly about. They must tow the raft back

to the drinking-place. Bevis untied the cord with which the raft was fastened to the willow, and stepped on board.

“Don’t pull too quick,” he said to Mark, giving him the cord; “or perhaps I shall run aground.”

“But you floated down,” said Mark. “Let me get in, and you tow; it’s my turn.”

“Your turn?” shouted Bevis, standing up as straight as a bolt. “This is *my* raft.”

“But you always have everything, and you floated down, and I have not; you have everything, and—”

“You are a great story,” said Bevis, stamping so that the raft shook and the ripples rushed from under it. “I don’t have everything, and you have more than half; and I gave you my engine and that box of gun-caps yesterday; and I hate you, and you are a big story.”

Out he scrambled, and seizing Mark by the shoulders, thrust him towards the raft with such force that it was with difficulty Mark saved himself from falling into the brook. He clung to the willow—the bark gave way under his fingers—but as he slipped, he slung himself over the raft and dropped on it.

“Take the pole,” said Bevis, still very angry, and

looking black as thunder. "Take the pole, and steer so as not to run in the mud, and not to hit against the bank. Now then," and putting the cord over his shoulder, off he started.

Mark had as much as ever he could do to keep the raft from striking one side or the other.

"Please don't go so fast," he said.

Bevis went slower, and towed steadily in silence. After they had passed the hawthorn under the may-bloom, Mark said, "Bevis," but Bevis did not answer.

"Bevis," repeated Mark, "I have had enough now; stop, and you get in."

"I shall not," said Bevis. "You are a great story."

In another minute Mark spoke again:—

"Let me get out and tow you now." Bevis did not reply. "I say—I say—I say, Bevis."

No use. Bevis towed him the whole way, till the raft touched the shallow shore of the drinking-place. Then Mark got out and helped him drag the vessel well up on the ground, so that it should not float away.

"Now," said Bevis, after it was quite done. "Will you be a story any more?"

"No," said Mark, "I will not be a story again."

So they walked back side by side to the willow tree; Mark, who was really in the right, feeling in the wrong. At the tree Bevis picked up the auger, and told him to bore the hole. Mark began, but suddenly stopped.

“What’s the good of boring the hole when we have not got any gunpowder,” said he.

“No more we have,” said Bevis. “This is very stupid, and they will not let me have any, though I have got some money, and I have a great mind to buy some and hide it. Just as if we did not know how to use powder, and as if we did not know how to shoot! Oh, I know! We will go and cut a bough of alder—there’s ever so many alders by the Long-pond—and burn it and make charcoal; it makes the best charcoal, you know, and they always use it for gunpowder, and then we can get some saltpetre. Let me see—”

“The Bailiff had some saltpetre the other day,” said Mark.

“So he did: it is in the dairy. Oh yes, and I know where some sulphur is. It is in the garden-house, where the tools are, in the orchard; it’s what they use to smother the bees with—”

“That’s on brown paper,” said Mark; “that won’t do.”

“No it’s not. You have to melt it to put it on paper, and dip the paper in. This is in a piece, it is like a short bar, and we will pound it up and mix them all together and make capital gunpowder.”

“Hurrah!” cried Mark, throwing down the auger. “Let’s go and cut the alder. Come on!”

“Stop,” said Bevis. “Lean on me, and walk slow. Don’t you know you have caught a dreadful fever, from being in the swamps by the river, and you can hardly walk, and you are very thin and weak? Lean on my arm and hang your head.”

Mark hung his head, turning his rosy cheeks down to the buttercups, and dragged his sturdy fever-stricken limbs along with an effort.

“Humph!” said a gruff voice.

“It’s the Indians!” cried Bevis, startled; for they were so absorbed they had not heard the Bailiff come up behind them. They quite jumped, as if about to be scalped.

“What be you doing to that tree?” said the Bailiff.

“Find out,” said Bevis. “It’s not your tree: and why don’t you say when you’re coming?”

“I saw you from the hedge,” said the Bailiff. “I was telling John where to cut the bushes from for

the new harrow." That caused the rustling in the forest. "You'll never chop he down."

"That we shall, if we want to."

"No, you won't—he stops your ship."

"It isn't a ship: it's a raft."

"Well, you can't get by."

"That we can."

"I thinks you be stopped," said the Bailiff, having now looked at the tree more carefully. "He be main thick,"—with a certain sympathy for stolid, inanimate obstruction.

"I tell you, people like us are never stopped by anything," said Bevis. "We go through forests, and we float down rivers, and we shoot tigers, and move the biggest trees ever seen—don't we, Mark?"

"Yes, that we do: nothing is anything to us."

"Of course not," said Bevis. "And if we can't chop it down or blow it up, as we mean to, then we dig round it. O, Mark, I say! I forgot! Let's dig a canal round it."

"How silly we were never to think of that!" said Mark. "A canal is the very thing—from here to the creek."

He meant where the stream curved to enclose the Peninsula: the proposed canal would make the voyage shorter.

“Cut some sticks—quick!” said Bevis. “We must plug out our canal—that is what they always do first, whether it is a canal, or a railway, or a drain, or anything. And I must draw a plan. I must get my pocket-book and pencil. Come on, Mark, and get the spade while I get my pencil.”

Off they ran. The Bailiff leaned on his hazel staff, one hand against the willow, and looked down into the water, as calmly as the sun itself reflected there. When he had looked awhile he shook his head and grunted: then he stumped away; and after a dozen yards or so, glanced back, grunted, and shook his head again. It could not be done. The tree was thick, the earth hard—no such thing: his sympathy, in a dull unspoken way, was with the immovable.

Mark went to work with the spade, throwing the turf he dug up into the brook; while Bevis, lying at full length on the grass, drew his plan of the canal. He drew two curving lines parallel, and half an inch apart, to represent the bend of the brook, and then two, as straight as he could manage, across, so as to shorten the distance, and avoid the obstruction. The rootlets of the grass held tight, when Mark tried to lift the spadeful he had dug, so that he could not tear them off.

He had to chop them at the side with his spade first, and then there was a root of the willow in the way; a very obstinate stout root, for which the little hatchet had to be brought to cut it. Under the softer turf the ground was very hard, as it had long been dry, so that by the time Bevis had drawn his plan and stuck in little sticks to show the course the canal was to take, Mark had only cleared about a foot square, and four or five inches deep, just at the edge of the bank, where he could thrust it into the stream.

“I have been thinking,” said Bevis as he came back from the other end of the line, “I have been thinking what we are, now we are making this canal?”

“Yes,” said Mark, “what are we?—they do not make canals on the Mississippi. Is this the Suez canal?”

“Oh no,” said Bevis. “This is not Africa; there is no sand, and there are no camels about. Stop a minute. Put down that spade, don’t dig another bit till we know what we are.”

Mark put down the spade, and they both thought very hard indeed, looking straight at one another.

“I know,” said Bevis, drawing a long breath. “We are digging a canal through Mount Athos, and we are Greeks.”

“But was it the Greeks?” said Mark. “Are you sure—”

“Quite sure,” said Bevis. “Perfectly quite sure. Besides, it doesn’t matter. *We* can do it if they did not, don’t you see?”

“So we can: and who are you then, if we are Greeks?”

“I am Alexander the Great.”

“And who am I?”

“O, you—you are anybody.”

“But I *must* be somebody,” said Mark, “else it will not do.”

“Well, you are: let me see—Pisistratus.”

“Who was Pisistratus?”

“I don’t know,” said Bevis. “It doesn’t matter in the least. Now dig.”

Pisistratus dug till he came to another root, which Alexander the Great chopped off for him with the hatchet. Pisistratus dug again and uncovered a water-rat’s hole which went down aslant to the water. They both knelt on the grass, and peered down the round tunnel: at the bottom where the water was, some of the fallen petals of the may-bloom had come in and floated there.

“This would do splendidly to put some gunpowder in and blow up, like the miners do,” said

Bevis. "And I believe that is the proper way to make a canal: it is how they make tunnels, I am sure."

"Greeks are not very good," said Mark. "I don't like Greeks: don't let's be Greeks any longer. The Mississippi was very much best."

"So it was," said Bevis. "The Mississippi is the nicest. I am not Alexander, and you are not Pisistratus. This is the Mississippi."

"Let us have another float down," said Mark. "Let me float down, and I will drag you all the way up this time."

"All right," said Bevis.

So they launched the raft, and Mark got in and floated down, and Bevis walked on the bank, giving him directions how to pilot the vessel, which as before was brought up by the willow leaning over the water. Just as they were preparing to tow it back again, and Bevis was climbing out on the willow to get into the raft they heard a splashing down the brook.

"What's that?" said Mark. "Is it Indians?"

"No, it's an alligator. At least, I don't know. Perhaps it's a canoe full of Indians. Give me the pole, quick; there now, take the hatchet. Look out!"

The splashing increased; then there was a “Yowp!” and Pan, the spaniel, suddenly appeared out of the flags by the osier-bed. He raced across the ground there, and jumped into the brook again, and immediately a moorcock, which he had been hunting, scuttled along the water, beating with his wings, and scrambling with his long legs hanging down, using both air and water to fly from his enemy. As he came near he saw Bevis on the willow, and rose out of the brook over the bank. Bevis hit at him with his pole, but missed; and Mark hurled the hatchet in vain. The moorcock flew straight across the meadow to another withy-bed, and then disappeared. It was only by threats that they stopped the spaniel from following.

Pan having got his plateful by patiently waiting about the doorway, after he had licked his chops, and turned up the whites of his eyes, to see if he could persuade them to give him any more, walked into the rick-yard, and choosing a favourite spot upon some warm straw—for straw becomes quite hot under sunshine—lay down and took a nap. When he awoke, having settled matters with the fleas, he strolled back to the ha-ha wall, and, seeing Bevis and Mark still busy by the brook, went down to know what they were doing. But

first going to a place he well knew to lap he scented the moorcock, and gave chase.

“Come here,” said Bevis; and, seizing the spaniel by the skin of his neck, he dragged him in the raft, stepped in quickly after, and held Pan while Mark hauled at the tow-line. But when Bevis had to take the pole to guide the raft from striking the bank Pan jumped out in a moment, preferring to swim rather than to ride in comfort, nor could any persuasions or threats get him on again. He barked along the shore, while Mark hauled and Bevis steered the craft.

Having beached her at the drinking-place on the shelving strand, they thought they had better go up the river a little way, and see if there were any traces of Indians; and, following the windings of the stream, they soon came to the hatch. Above the hatch the water was smooth, as it usually is where it is deep and approaching the edge, and Bevis’s quick eye caught sight of a tiny ripple there near one bank, so tiny that it hardly extended across the brook, and disappeared after the third wavelet.

“Keep Pan there!” he said. “Hit him—hit him harder than that; he doesn’t mind.”

Mark punched the spaniel, who crouched; but, nevertheless, his body crept, as it were, towards

the hatch, where Bevis was climbing over. Bevis took hold of the top rail, put his foot on the rail below, all green and slippery with weeds where the water splashed, like the rocks where the sea comes, then his other foot further along, and so got over with the deep water in front, and the roar of the fall under, and the bubbles rushing down the stream. The bank was very steep, but there was a notch to put the foot in, and a stout hawthorn stem—the thorns on which had long since been broken off for the purpose—gave him something to hold to and by which to lift himself up.

Then he walked stealthily along the bank—it overhung the dark deep water, and seemed about to slip in under him. There was a plantation of trees on that side, and on the other a hawthorn hedge, so that it was a quiet and sheltered spot. As he came to the place where he had seen the ripple, he looked closer, and in among a bunch of rushes, with the green stalks standing up all round it, he saw a moorhen's nest. It was made of rushes, twined round like a wreath, or perhaps more like a large green turban, and there were three or four young moorhens in it. The old bird had slipped away as he came near, and diving under the surface rose ten yards off under a projecting bush.

Bevis dropped on his knee to take one of the young birds, but in an instant they rolled out of the nest, with their necks thrust out in front, and fell splash in the water, where they swam across, one with a piece of shell clinging to its back, and another piece of shell was washed from it by the water. Pan was by his side in a minute; he had heard the splash, and seen the young moorhens, and with a whine, as Mark kicked him—unable to hold him any longer—he rushed across.

“They are such pretty dear little things,” said Bevis, in an ecstasy of sentiment, calling to Mark. “Lie down!” banging Pan with a dead branch which he hastily snatched up. The spaniel’s back sounded hollow as the wood rebounded, and broke on his ribs. “Such dear little things! I would not have them hurt for anything.”

Bang again on Pan’s back, who gave up the attempt, knowing from sore experience that Bevis was not to be trifled with. But by the time Mark had got there the little moorhens had hidden in the grasses beside the stream, though one swam out for a minute, and then concealed itself again.

“Don’t you love them?” said Bevis. “I do. I’ll *smash* you”—to Pan, cowering at his feet.

The moorhens did not appear again, so they went

back and sat on the top of the steep bank, their legs dangling over the edge above the bubbling water.

A broad cool shadow from the trees had fallen over the hatch, for the afternoon had gone on, and the sun was declining behind them over the western hills. A broad cool shadow, whose edges were far away, so that they were in the midst of it. The thrushes sang in the ashes, for they knew that the quiet evening, with the dew they love, was near. A bullfinch came to the hawthorn hedge just above the hatch, looked in and out once or twice, and then stepped inside the spray near his nest. A yellow-hammer called from the top of a tree, and another answered him across the field. Afar in the mowing-grass the crake lifted his voice, for he talks more as the sun sinks.

The swirling water went round and round under the fall, with lines of white bubbles rising, and quivering masses of yellowish foam ledged on the red rootlets under the bank and against the flags. The swirling water, ceaselessly beaten by the descending stream coming on it with a long-continued blow, returned to be driven away again. A steady roar of the fall, and a rippling sound above it of bursting bubbles and crossing wavelets of the

hastening stream, notched and furrowed over stones, frowning in eager haste. The rushing and the coolness, and the song of the brook and the birds, and the sense of the sun sinking, stilled even Bevis and Mark a little while. They sat and listened, and said nothing; the delicious brook filled their ears with music.

Next minute Bevis seized Pan by the neck and pitched him over into the bubbles. In an instant, before he came to the surface, as his weight carried him beneath, Pan was swept down the stream, and when he came up he could not swim against it, but was drifted away till he made for the flags, which grew on a shallow spot. There he easily got out, shook himself, and waited for them to come over.

“I am hungry,” said Mark. “What ought we to have to eat; what is right on the Mississippi? I don’t believe they have tea. There is Polly shouting for us.”

“No,” said Bevis thoughtfully; “I don’t think they do. How stupid of her to stand there shouting and waving her handkerchief, as if we could not find our way straight across the trackless prairie. I know—we will have some honey! Don’t you know? Of course the hunters find lots of wild

honey in the hollow trees. We will have some honey ; there's a big jar full."

So they got over the hatch, and went home, leaving their tools scattered hither and thither beside the Mississippi. They climbed up the ha-ha wall, putting the toes of their boots where the flat stones of which it was built, without mortar, were farthest apart, and so made steps while they could hold to the wiry grass-tufts on the top.

"Where's your hat?" said Polly to Bevis.

"I don't know," said Bevis. "I suppose it's in the brook. It doesn't matter."

CHAPTER IV.

DISCOVERY OF THE NEW SEA.

NEXT morning Bevis went out into the meadow to try and find a plant whose leaves, or one of them, always pointed to the north, like a green compass lying on the ground. There was one in the prairies by which the hunters directed themselves across those oceans of grass without a landmark as the mariners at sea. Why should there not be one in the meadows here—in these prairies—by which to guide himself from forest to forest, from hedge to hedge, where there was no path? If there was a path it was not proper to follow it, nor ought you to know your way; you ought to find it by sign.

He had “blazed” ever so many boughs of the hedges with the hatchet, or his knife if he had not got the hatchet with him, to recognize his route through the woods. When he found a nest begun or finished, and waiting for the egg, he used to cut

a “blaze”—that is, to peel off the bark—or make a notch, or cut a bough off about three yards from the place, so that he might easily return to it, though hidden with foliage. No doubt the grass had a secret of this kind, and could tell him which was the way, and which was the north and south if he searched long enough.

So the raft being an old story now, as he had had it a day, Bevis went out into the field, looking very carefully down into the grass. Just by the path there were many plantains, but their long, narrow leaves did not point in any particular direction, no two plants had their leaves parallel. The blue scabious had no leaves to speak of, nor had the red knapweed, nor the yellow rattle, nor the white moon-daisies, nor golden buttercups, nor red sorrel. There were stalks and flowers, but the plants of the mowing-grass, in which he had no business to be walking, had very little leaf. He tried to see if the flowers turned more one way than the other, or bowed their heads to the north, as men seem to do, taking that pole as their guide, but none did so. They leaned in any direction, as the wind had left them, or as the sun happened to be when they burst their green bonds and came forth to the light.

The wind came past as he looked and stroked everything the way it went, shaking white pollen from the bluish tops of the tall grasses. The wind went on and left him and the grasses to themselves. How should I know which was the north or the south or the west from these? Bevis asked himself, without framing any words to his question. There was no knowing. Then he walked to the hedge to see if the moss grew more on one side of the elms than the other, or if the bark was thicker and rougher.

After he had looked at twenty trees he could not see much difference; those in the hedge had the moss thickest on the eastern side (he knew which was east very well himself, and wanted to see if the moss knew), and those in the lane just through it had the moss thickest on their western side, which was clearly because of the shadow. The trees were really in a double row, running north and south, and the coolest shadow was in between them, and so the moss grew there most. Nor were the boughs any longer or bigger any side more than the other, it varied as the tree was closely surrounded with other trees, for each tree repelled its neighbour. None of the trees, nor the moss, nor grasses cared anything at all about north or south.

Bevis sat down in the mowing-grass, though he knew the Bailiff would have been angry at such a hole being made in it; and when he was sitting on the ground it rose as high as his head. He could see nothing but the sky, and while he sat there looking up he saw that the clouds all drifted one way, towards his house. Presently a starling came past, also flying straight for the house, and after a while another. Next three bees went over as straight as a line, all going one after another that way. The bees went because they had gathered as much honey as they could carry, and were hastening home without looking to the right or to the left. The starlings went because they had young in their nests in a hole of the roof by the chimney, and they had found some food for their fledglings. So now he could find his way home across the pathless prairie by going the same way as the clouds, the bees, and the starlings.

But when he had reached home he recollected that he ought to know the latitude, and that there were Arabs or some other people in Africa who found out the latitude of the place they were in by gazing at the sun through a tube. Bevis considered a little, and then went to the rick-yard, where there was a large elder bush, and cut a straight branch between

the knots with his knife. He peeled it, and then forced out the pith, and thus made a tube. Next he took a thin board, and scratched a circle on it with the point of the compasses, and divided it into degrees. Round the tube he bent a piece of wire, and put the ends through a gimlet-hole in the centre of the board. The ends were opened apart, so as to fasten the tube to the board, allowing it to rotate round the circle. Two gimlet holes were bored at the top corners of the board, and string passed through so that the instrument could be attached to a tree or post.

He was tying it to one of the young walnut-trees as an upright against which to work his astrolabe, when Mark arrived, and everything had to be explained to him. After they had glanced through the tube, and decided that the raft was at least ten degrees distant, it was clearly of no use to go to it to-day, as they could not reach it under a week's travel. The best thing, Mark thought, would be to continue their expedition in some other direction.

"Let's go round the Longpond," said Bevis; "we have never been quite round it."

"So we will," said Mark. "But we shall not be back to dinner."

“As if travellers ever thought of dinner! Of course we shall take our provisions with us.”

“Let’s go and get our spears,” said Mark.

“Let’s take Pan,” said Bevis.

“Where is your old compass?” said Mark.

“O, I know—and I must make a map; wait a minute. We ought to have a medicine-chest; the savages will worry us for physic: and very likely we shall have dreadful fevers.”

“So we shall, of course; but perhaps there are wonderful plants to cure us, and we know them and the savages don’t—there’s sorrel.”

“Of course, and we can nibble some hawthorn leaf.”

“Or a stalk of wheat.”

“Or some watercress.”

“Or some nuts.”

“No, certainly not; they’re not ripe,” said Bevis, “and unripe fruit is very dangerous in tropical countries.”

“We ought to keep a diary,” said Mark. “When we go to sleep who shall watch first, you or I?”

“We’ll light a fire,” said Bevis. “That will frighten the lions; they will glare at us, but they can’t stand fire—you hit them on the head with a burning stick.”

So they went in, and loaded their pockets with huge double slices of bread-and-butter done up in paper, apples, and the leg of a roast duck from the pantry. Then came the compass, an old one in a brass case; Mark broke his nails opening the case, which was tarnished, and the card at once swung round to the north, pointing to the elms across the road from the window of the sitting-room. Bevis took the bow and three arrows, made of the young wands of hazel which grow straight, and Mark was armed with a spear, a long ash rod with sharpened end, which they thrust in the kitchen fire a few minutes to harden in the proper manner.

Besides which, there was Bevis's pocket-book for the diary, and a large sheet of brown paper for the map; you see travellers have not always everything at command, but must make use of what they have. Pan raced before them up the footpath; the gate that led to the Longpond was locked, and too high to be climbed easily, but they knew a gap, and crept through on hands and knees.

"Take care there are no cobras or rattlesnakes among those dead leaves," said Mark, when they were halfway through, and quite over-arched and hidden under brambles.

"Stick your spear into them," said Bevis, who

was first, and Mark, putting his spear past him, stirred up the heap of leaves.

“All right,” said he. “But look at that bough—is it a bough or a snake?”

There was an oak branch in the ditch, crooked and grey with lichen, half concealed by rushes; its curving shape and singular hue gave it some resemblance to a serpent. But when he stabbed at it with his spear it did not move; and they crept through without hurt. As they stood up in the field the other side they had an anxious consultation as to what piece of water it was they were going to discover; whether it was a lake in Central Africa, or one in America.

“I’m tired of lakes,” said Mark. “They have found out such a lot of lakes, and the canoes are always upset, and there is such a lot of mud. Let’s have a new sea altogether.”

“So we will,” said Bevis. “That’s capital—we will find a new sea where no one has ever been before. Look!”—for they had now advanced to where the gleam of the sunshine on the mere was visible through the hedge—“look! there it is; is it not wonderful?”

“Yes,” said Mark, “write it down in the diary; here’s my pencil. Be quick; put ‘Found a new

sea'—be quick—there, come on—let's run—hurrah!"

They dashed open the gate, and ran down to the beach. It was a rough descent over large stones, but they reached the edge in a minute, and as they came there was a splashing in several places along the shore. Something was striving to escape, alarmed at their approach. Mark fell on his knees, and put his hand where two or three stones, half in and half out of water, formed a recess, and feeling about drew out two roach, one of which slipped from his fingers; the other he held. Bevis rushed at another splashing, but he was not quick enough, for it was difficult to scramble over the stones, and the fish swam away just as he got there. Mark's fish was covered with tiny slippery specks. The roach had come up to leave their eggs under the stones. When they had looked at the fish they put it back in the water, and with a kind of shake it dived down and made off. As they watched it swim out they now saw that three or four yards from the shore there were crowds upon crowds of fish travelling to and fro, following the line of the land.

They were so many, that the water seemed thick with them, and some were quite large for roach. These had finished putting their eggs under the

stones, and were now swimming up and down. Every now and then, as they silently watched the roach—for they had never before seen such countless multitudes of fish—they could hear splashings further along the stones, where those that were up in the recesses were suddenly seized with panic fear without cause, and struggled to get out, impeding each other, and jammed together in the narrow entrances. For they could not forget their cruel enemies the jacks, and dreaded lest they should be pounced upon while unable even to turn.

A black cat came down the bank some way off, and they saw her swiftly dart her paw into the water, and snatch out a fish. The scales shone silver white, and reflected the sunshine into their eyes like polished metal as the fish quivered and leaped under the claw. Then the cat quietly, and pausing over each morsel, ate the living creature. When she had finished she crept towards the water to get another.

“What a horrid thing!” said Mark. “She ate the fish alive—cruel wretch! Let’s kill her.”

“Kill her,” said Bevis; and before he could fit an arrow to his bow Mark picked up a stone, and flung it with such a good aim and with such force that although it did not hit the cat, it struck a stone

and split into fragments, which flew all about her like a shell. The cat raced up the bank, followed by a second stone, and at the top met Pan, who did not usually chase cats, having been beaten for it, but seeing in an instant that she was in disgrace, he snapped at her and drove her wild with terror up a pine-tree. They called Pan off, for it was no use his yapping at a tree, and walked along the shore, climbing over stones, but the crowds of roach were everywhere; till presently they came to a place where the stones ceased, and there was a shallow bank of sand shelving into the water and forming a point.

There the fish turned round and went back. Thousands kept coming up and returning, and while they stayed here watching, gazing into the clear water, which was still and illuminated to the bottom by the sunlight, they saw two great fish come side by side up from the depths beyond and move slowly, very slowly, just over the sand. They were two huge tench, five or six pounds a-piece, roaming idly away from the muddy holes they lie in. But they do not stay in such holes always, and once now and then you may see them like this as in a glass tank. The pair did not go far; they floated slowly rather than swam, first a few yards one way

and then a few yards the other. Bevis and Mark were breathless with eagerness.

“Go and fetch my fishing-rod,” whispered Bevis, unable to speak loud; he was so excited.

“No, you go,” said Mark; “I’ll stay and watch them.”

“I shan’t,” said Bevis sharply, “you ought to go.”

“I shan’t,” said Mark.

Just then the tench, having surveyed the bottom there, turned and faded away into the darker deep water.

“There,” said Bevis, “if you had run quick!”

“I won’t fetch everything,” said Mark.

“Then you’re no use,” said Bevis. “Suppose I was shooting an elephant, and you did not hand me another gun quick, or another arrow; and suppose—”

“But *I* might be shooting the elephant,” interrupted Mark, “and you could hand me the gun.”

“Impossible,” said Bevis; “I never heard anything so absurd. Of course it’s the captain who always does everything; and if there was only one biscuit left, of course you would let me eat it, and lie down and die under a tree, so that I might go on and reach the settlement.”

"I *hate* dying under a tree," said Mark, "and you always want everything."

Bevis said nothing, but marched on very upright and very angry, and Mark followed, putting his feet into the marks Bevis left as he strode over the yielding sand. Neither spoke a word. The shore trended in again after the point, and the indentation was full of weeds, whose broad brownish leaves floated on the surface. Pan worked about and sniffed among the willow bushes on their left, which, when the lake was full, were in the water, but now that it had shrunk under the summer heat were several yards from the edge.

Bevis, leading the way, came to a place where the strand, till then so low and shelving, suddenly became steep, where a slight rise of the ground was cut as it were through by the water, which had worn a cliff eight or ten feet above his head. The water came to the bottom of the cliff, and there did not seem any way past it except by going away from the edge into the field, and so round it. Mark at once went round, hastening as fast as he could to get in front, and he came down to the water on the other side of the cliff in half a minute, looked at Bevis, and then went on with Pan.

Bevis, with a frown on his forehead, stood look-

ing at the cliff, having determined that he would not go round, and yet he could not get past because the water, which was dark and deep, going straight down, came to the bank, which rose from it like a wall. First he took out his pocket-knife and thought he would cut steps in the sand, and he did cut one large enough to put his toe in; but then he recollected that he should have nothing to hold to. He had half a mind to go back home and get some big nails and drive into the hard sand to catch hold of, only by that time Mark would be so far ahead he could not overtake him and would boast that he had explored the new sea first. Already he was fifty yards in front, and walking as fast as he could. How he wished he had his raft, and then that he could swim! He would have jumped into the water and swam round the cliff in a minute.

He saw Mark climbing over some railings that went down to the water to divide the fields. He looked up again at the cliff, and almost felt inclined to leave it and run round and overtake Mark. When he looked down again Mark was out of sight, hidden by hawthorn bushes and the branches of trees. Bevis was exceedingly angry, and he walked up and down and gazed round in his rage. But as he turned once more to the cliff, suddenly Pan ap-

peared at an opening in the furze and bramble about halfway up. The bushes grew at the side, and the spaniel, finding Bevis did not follow Mark, had come back and was waiting for him. Bevis, without thinking, pushed into the furze, and immediately he saw him coming, Pan, eager to go forward again, ran along the face of the cliff about four feet from the top. He seemed to run on nothing, and Bevis was curious to see how he had got by.

The bushes becoming thicker, Bevis had at last to go on hands and knees under them, and found a hollow space, where there was a great rabbit-bury, big enough at the mouth for Pan to creep in. When he stood on the sand thrown out from it he could see how Pan had done it; there was a narrow ledge, not above four inches wide, on the face of the cliff. It was only just wide enough for a footing, and the cliff fell sheer down to the water; but Bevis, seeing that he could touch the top of the cliff, and so steady himself, never hesitated a moment.

He stepped on the ledge, right foot first, the other close behind it, and held lightly to the grass at the edge of the field above, only lightly lest he should pull it out by the roots. Then he put his right foot forward again, and drew his left up to it, and so along, keeping the right first (he could not walk

properly, the ledge being so narrow), he worked himself along. It was quite easy, though it seemed a long way down to the water, it always looks very much farther down than it does up, and as he glanced down he saw a perch rise from the depths, and it occurred to him in the moment what a capital place it would be for perch-fishing.

He could see all over that part of the lake, and noticed two moorhens feeding in the weeds on the other side, when puff! the wind came over the field, and reminded him, as he involuntarily grasped the grass tighter, that he must not stay in such a place where he might lose his balance. So he went on, and a dragon-fly flew past out a little way over the water and then back to the field, but Bevis was not to be tempted to watch his antics, he kept steadily on, a foot at a time, till he reached a willow on the other side, and had a bough to hold. Then he shouted, and Pan, who was already far ahead, stopped and looked back at the well-known sound of triumph.

Running down the easy slope, Bevis quickly reached the railings and climbed over. On the other side a meadow came down to the edge, and he raced through the grass and was already halfway to the next rails when some one called "Bevis!" and there was Mark coming out from behind an oak

in the field. Bevis stopped, half-pleased, half-angry.

“I waited for you,” said Mark.

“I came across the cliff,” said Bevis.

“I saw you,” said Mark.

“But you ran away from me,” said Bevis.

“But I am not running now.”

“It is very wrong when we are on an expedition,” said Bevis. “People must do as the captain tells them.”

“I won’t do it again,” said Mark.

“You ought to be punished,” said Bevis, “you ought to be put on half-rations. Are you quite sure you will never do it again?”

“Never.”

“Well then, this once you are pardoned. Now, mind in future, as you are lieutenant, you set a good example. There’s a summer snipe.”

Out flew a little bird from the shore, startled as Pan came near, with a piping whistle, and, describing a semicircle, returned to the hard mud fifty yards farther on. It was a summer snipe, and when they approached, after getting over the next railings, it flew out again over the water, and making another half-circle passed back to where they had first seen it. Here the strand was hard mud, dried by the sun,

and broken up into innumerable holes by the hoofs of cattle and horses which had come down to drink from the pasture, and had to go through the mud into which they sank when it was soft. Three or four yards from the edge there was a narrow strip of weeds, showing that a bank followed the line of the shore there. It was so unpleasant walking over this hard mud, that they went up into the field, which rose high, so that from the top they had a view of the lake.

CHAPTER V.

BY THE NEW NILE.

“Do you see any canoes?” said Mark.

“No,” said Bevis. “Can you? Look very carefully.”

They gazed across the broad water over the gleaming ripples far away, for the light wind did not raise them by the shore, and traced the edge of the willows and the weeds.

“The savages are in hiding,” said Bevis, after a pause. “Perhaps they’re having a feast.”

“Or gone somewhere to war.”

“Are they cannibals?” said Mark. “I should not like to be gnawn.”

“Very likely,” said Bevis. “No one has ever been here before, so they are nearly sure to be; they always are where no one has been. This would be a good place to begin the map as we can see so far. Let’s sit down.”

“Let’s get behind a tree, then,” said Mark; “else if we stay still long perhaps we shall be seen.”

So they went a little farther to an ash, and sat down by it. Bevis spread out his sheet of brown paper.

“Give me an apple,” said Mark, “while you draw.” Bevis did so, and then, lying on the ground at full length, began to trace out the course of the shore; Mark lay down too, and held one side of the paper that the wind might not lift it. First Bevis made a semicircle to represent the stony bay where they found the roach, then an angular point for the sandy bar, then a straight line for the shelving shore.

“There ought to be names,” said Mark. “What shall we call this?” putting his finger on the bay.

“Don’t splutter over the map,” said Bevis; “take that apple pip off it. Of course there will be names when I have drawn the outline. Here’s the cliff.” He put a slight projection where the cliff jutted out a little way, then a gentle curve for the shore of the meadow, and began another trending away to the left for the place where they were.

“That’s not long enough,” said Mark.

"It's not finished," said Bevis. "How can I finish it when we have only got as far as this? How do I know, you stupid, how far this bay goes into the land? Perhaps there's another sea round there," pointing over the field. Instead of saying silly things, just find out some names, now."

"What sea is it?" said Mark thoughtfully.

"I can't tell," said Bevis. "It is most extraordinary to find a new sea. And such an enormous big one. Why how many days' journey have we come already?"

"Thirty," said Mark. "Put it down in the diary, thirty days' journey. There, that's right. Now, what sea is it? Is it the Atlantic?"

"No; it's not the Atlantic, nor the Pacific, nor the South Sea; it's bigger than all those."

"It's much more difficult to find a name than a sea," said Mark.

"Much," said Bevis. They stared at each other for awhile. "I know," said Bevis.

"Well, what is it?" said Mark excitedly, raising himself on his knees to hear the name.

"I know," said Bevis. "I'll lie down and shut my eyes, and you take a piece of grass and tickle me; then I can think. I can't think unless I'm tickled."

He disposed himself very comfortably on his back with his knees up, and tilted his straw hat so as to shade that side of his face towards the sun. Mark pulled a bennet.

“Not *too* ticklish,” said Bevis, “else that won’t do : don’t touch my lips.”

“All right.”

Mark held the bending bennet (the spike of the grass) bending with the weight of its tip, and drew it very gently across Bevis’s forehead. Then he let it just touch his cheek, and afterwards put the tip very daintily on his eyelid. From there he let it wander like a fly over his forehead again, and close by, but not in the ear (as too ticklish), leaving little specks of pollen on the skin, and so to the neck, and next up again to the hair, and on the other cheek under the straw hat. Bevis, with his eyes shut, kept quite still under this luxurious tickling for some time, till Mark, getting tired, put the bennet delicately on his lip, when he started and rubbed his mouth.

“Now, how stupid you are, Mark; I was just thinking. Now, do it again.”

Mark did it again.

“Are you thinking?” he asked presently.

“Yes,” whispered Bevis. They were so silent they heard the grasshoppers singing in the grass,

and the swallows twittering as they flew over, and the loud midsummer hum in the sky.

“Are you thinking?” asked Mark again. Bevis did not answer—he was asleep. Mark bent over him, and went on tickling, half dreamy himself, till he nodded, and his hat fell on Bevis, who sat up directly.

“I know.”

“What is it?”

“It is not one sea,” said Bevis; “it is a lot of seas. That’s the Blue Sea, there,” pointing to the stony bay where the water was still and blue under the sky. “That’s the Yellow Sea, there,” pointing to the low muddy shore where the summer snipe flew up, and where, as it was so shallow and so often disturbed by cattle, the water was thick for some yards out.

“And what is that out there!” said Mark, pointing southwards to the broader open water where the ripples were sparkling bright in the sunshine.

“That is the Golden Sea,” said Bevis. “It is like butterflies flapping their wings,”—he meant the flickering wavelets.

“And this round here,” where the land trended to the left, and there was a deep inlet.

“It is the Gulf,” said Bevis; “Fir-Tree Gulf,” as he noticed the tops of fir-trees.

“And that up at the top yonder, right away as far as you can see beyond the Golden Sea?”

“That’s the Indian Ocean,” said Bevis; “and that island on the left side there is Serendih.”

“Where Sinbad went?”

“Yes; and that one by it is the Unknown Island, and a magician lives there in a long white robe, and he has a serpent a hundred feet long coiled up in a cave under a bramble bush, and the most wonderful things in the world.”

“Let’s go there,” said Mark.

“So we will,” said Bevis, “directly we have got a ship.”

“Write the names down,” said Mark. “Put them on the map before we forget them.”

Bevis wrote them on the map, and then they started again upon their journey. Where the gulf began they found a slight promontory, or jutting point, defended by blocks of stone; for here the waves, when the wind blew west or south, came rolling with all their might over the long broad Golden Sea from the Indian Ocean. Pan left them while they stood here, to hunt among the thistles in an old sand-quarry behind. He started a rabbit,

and chased it up the quarry, so that when they looked back they saw him high up the side, peering into the bury. Sand-martins were flying in and out of their round holes. At one place there was only a narrow strip of land between the ocean and the quarry, so that it seemed as if its billows might at any time force their way in.

They left the shore awhile, and went into the quarry, and winding in and out the beds of nettles and thistles climbed up a slope, where they sank at every step ankle deep in sand. It led to a broad platform of sand, above which the precipice rose straight to the roots of the grass above, which marked the top of the cliff with brown, and where humble-bees were buzzing along the edge, and, bending the flowers down on which they alighted, were thus suspended in space. In the cool recesses of the firs at the head of Fir-Tree Gulf a dove was cooing, and a great aspen rustled gently.

They took out their knives and pecked at the sand. It was hard, but could be pecked, and grooves cut in it. The surface was almost green from exposure to the weather, but under that white. When they looked round over the ocean they were quite alone : there was no one in sight either way, as far as they could see ; nothing but the wall

of sand behind, and the wide gleaming water in front.

“What a long way we are from other people,” said Mark.

“Thousands of miles,” said Bevis.

“Is it quite safe?”

“I don’t know,” doubtfully.

“Are there not strange creatures in these deserted places?”

“Sometimes,” said Bevis. “Sometimes there are things with wings, which have spikes on them, and they have eyes that burn you.”

Mark grasped his knife and spear, and looked into the beds of thistles and nettles, which would conceal anything underneath.

“Let’s call Pan,” he whispered.

Bevis shouted “Pan.” “Pan!” came back in an echo from another part of the quarry. “Pan!” shouted Bevis and Mark together. Pan did not come. They called again and whistled; but he did not come.

“Perhaps something has eaten him,” said Mark.

“Very likely,” said Bevis. “We ought to have a charm. Don’t forget next time we come to bring a talisman, so that none of these things can touch us.”

"I know," said Mark. "I know." He took his spear and drew a circle on the platform of sand. "Come inside this. There, that's it. Now stand still here. A circle is magic, you know."

"So it is," said Bevis. "Pan ! Pan !"

Pan did not come.

"What's in those holes ?" said Mark, pointing to some large rabbit-burrows on the right side of the quarry.

"Mummies," said Bevis. "You may be sure there are mummies there, and very likely magic writings in their hands. I wish we could get a magic writing. Then we could do anything, and we could know all the secrets."

"What secrets ?"

"Why, all these things have secrets."

"All ?" said Mark.

"All," said Bevis, looking round and pointing with an arrow in his hand. "All the trees, and all the stones, and all the flowers—"

"And these ?" said Mark, picking up a shell.

"Yes, once ; but can't you see it is dead, and the secret, of course, is gone. If we had a magic writing."

"Let's buy a book," said Mark.

"They are not books ; they are rolls, and you

unroll them very slowly, and see curious things, pictures that move over the paper—”

Boom !

They started. Mark lifted his spear, Bevis his bow. A deep, low, and slow sound, like thunder, toned from its many mutterings to a mighty sob, filled their ears for a moment. It might have been very distant thunder, or a cannon in the forts far away. It was one of those mysterious sounds that are heard in summer when the sky is clear and the wind soft, and the midsummer hum is loud. They listened, but it did not come again.

“What was that ?” said Mark at last.

“I don’t know ; of course it was something magic.”

“Perhaps they don’t like us coming into these magic places,” said Mark. “Perhaps it is to tell us to go away. No doubt Pan is eaten.”

“I shall not go away,” said Bevis, as the boom did not come again. “I shall fight first ;” and he fitted his arrow to the string. “What’s that !” and in his start he let the arrow fly down among the thistles.

It was Pan looking down upon them from the edge above, where he had been waiting ever since they first called him, and wondering why they

did not see him. Bevis, chancing to glance up defiantly as he fitted his arrow to shoot the genie of the boom, had caught sight of the spaniel's face peering over the edge. Angry with Pan for making him start, Bevis picked up a stone and flung it at him, but the spaniel slipped back and escaped it.

"Fetch my arrow," said Bevis, stamping his foot.

Mark went down and got it. As he came up the sandy slope he looked back.

"There's a canoe," he said.

"So it is."

A long way off there was a black mark as it were among the glittering wavelets of the Golden Sea. They could not see it properly for the dazzling gleam.

"The cannibals have seen us," said Mark. "They can see miles. We shall be gnawn. Let's run out of sight before they come too near."

They ran down the slope into the quarry, and then across to the fir-trees. Then they stopped and watched the punt, but it did not come towards them. They had not been seen. They followed the path through the firs, and crossed the head of the gulf.

A slow stream entered the lake there, and they went down to the shore, where it opened to the larger water. Under a great willow, whose tops rose as high as the firs, and an alder or two, it was so cool and pleasant, that Mark, as he played with the water with his spear, pushing it this way and that, and raising bubbles, and a splashing as a whip sings in the air, thought he should like to dabble in it. He sat down on a root and took off his shoes and stockings, while Bevis, going a little way up the stream, flung a dead stick into it, and then walked beside it as it floated gently down. But he walked much faster than the stick floated, there was so little current.

“Mark,” said he, suddenly stopping, and taking up some of the water in the hollow of his hand, “Mark!”

“Yes. What is it?”

“This is fresh water. Isn’t it lucky?”

“Why?”

“Why, you silly, of course we should have died of thirst. *That’s the sea*” (pointing out). “This will save our lives.”

“So it will,” said Mark, putting one foot into the water and then the other. Then looking back, as he stood half up his ankles, “We can call here for

fresh water when we have our ship—when we go to the Unknown Island.”

“So we can,” said Bevis. “We must have a barrel and fill it. But I wonder what river this is,” and he walked back again beside it.

Mark walked further out till it was over his ankles, and then till it was half as deep as his knee. He jumped up both feet together, and splashed as he came down, and shouted. Bevis shouted to him from the river. Next they both shouted together, and a dove flew out of the firs and went off.

“What river is this?” Bevis called presently.

“O!” cried Mark suddenly; and Bevis glancing round saw him stumble, and, in his endeavour to save himself, plunge his spear into the water as if it had been the ground, to steady himself; but the spear, though long, touched nothing up to his hand. He bent over. Bevis held his breath, thinking he must topple and fall headlong; but somehow he just saved himself, swung round, and immediately he could run out upon the shore. Bevis rushed back.

“What was it?” he asked.

“It’s a hole,” said Mark, whose cheeks had turned white, and now became red, as the blood came back. “An awful deep hole—the spear won’t touch the bottom.”

As he waded out at first on shelving sand he laughed, and shouted, and jumped, and suddenly, as he stepped, his foot went over the edge of the deep hole; his spear, as he tried to save himself with it, touched nothing, so that it was only by good fortune that he recovered his balance. Once now and then in the autumn, when the water was very low, dried up by the long summer heats, this hole was visible and nearly empty, and the stream fell over a cataract into it, boiling and bubbling, and digging it deeper. But now, as the water had only just begun to recede, it was full, so that the stream ran slow, held back and checked by their sea.

This hollow was quite ten feet deep, sheer descent, but you could not see it, for the shore seemed to slope as shallow as possible.

Mark was much frightened, and sat down on the root to put on his shoes and stockings. Bevis took the spear, and going to the edge, and leaning over and feeling the bottom with it, he could find the hole, where the spear slipped and touched nothing, about two yards out.

"It is a horrid place," he said. "How should I have got you out? I wish we could swim."

"So do I," said Mark. "And they will never

let us go out in a boat by ourselves—I mean in a ship to the Unknown Island—till we can.”

“No; that they won’t,” said Bevis. “We must begin to swim directly. My papa will show me, and I will show you. But how should I have got you out if you had fallen? Let me see; there’s a gate up there.”

“It is so heavy,” said Mark. “You could not drag it down, and fling it in quick enough. If we had the raft up here.”

“Ah, yes. There is a pole loose there—that would have done.” He pointed to some railings that crossed the stream. The rails were nailed, but there was a pole at the side, only thrust into the bushes. “I could have pulled that out and held it to you.”

Mark had now got his shoes on, and they started again, looking for a bridge to cross the stream, and continue their journey round the New Sea. As they could not see any they determined to cross by the railings, which they did without much trouble, holding to the top bar, and putting their feet on the second, which was about three inches over the water. The stream ran deep and slow; it was dark, because it was in shadow, for the trees hung over from each side. Bevis, who was first, stopped

in the middle and looked up it. There was a thick hedge and trees each side, and a great deal of fern on the banks. It was straight for a good way, so that they could see some distance till the boughs hid the rest.

“I should like to go up there,” said Mark. “Some day, if we can get a boat under these rails, let us go up it.”

“So we will,” said Bevis. “It is proper to explore a river. But what river is this?”

“Is it the Congo?” said Mark.

“O! no. The Congo is not near this sea at all. Perhaps it’s the Amazon.”

“It can’t be the Mississippi,” said Mark. “That’s a long way off now. I know—see it runs slow, and it’s not clear, and we don’t know where it comes from. It’s the Nile.”

“So it is,” said Bevis. “It is the Nile, and some day we will go up to the source.”

“What’s that swimming across up there?” said Mark.

“It is too far; I can’t tell. Most likely a crocodile. How fortunate you did not fall in.”

When they had crossed, they whistled for Pan, who had been busy among the fern on the bank, sniffing after the rabbits which had holes there.

Pan came and swam over to them in a minute. They travelled on some way and found the ground almost level and so thick with sedges and grass and rushes that they walked in a forest of green up to their waists. The water was a long way off beyond the weeds. They tried to go down to it, but the ground got very soft and their feet sank into it; it was covered with horsetails there, acres and acres of them, and after these shallow water hidden under floating weeds. Some coots were swimming about the edge of the weeds too far to fear them. So they returned to the firm ground and walked on among the sedges and rushes. There was a rough path, though not much marked, which wound about so as to get the firmest footing, but every now and then they had to jump over a wet place.

“What immense swamps,” said Mark; “I wonder where ever we shall get to.”

Underfoot there was a layer of the dead sedges of last year which gave beneath their weight, and the ground itself was formed of the roots of sedges and other plants. The water had not long since covered the place where they were, and the surface was still damp, for the sunshine could not dry it, having to pass through the thick growth above and

the matted stalks below. A few scattered willow bushes showed how high the water had been by the fibres on the stems which had once flourished in it and were now almost dried up by the heat. A faint malarious odour rose from the earth, drawn from the rotting stalks by the hot sun. There was no shadow, and after a while they wearied of stepping through the sedges, sinking a little at every step, which much increases the labour of walking.

The monotony, too, was oppressive, nothing but sedges, flags, and rushes, sedges and horsetails, and they did not seem to get much farther after all their walking. First they were silent, labour makes us quiet; then they stopped and looked back. The perfect level caused the distance to appear more than it really was, because there was a thin invisible haze hovering over the swamp. Beyond the swamp was the gulf they had gone round, and across it the yellow sand quarry facing them. It looked a very long way off.

CHAPTER VI.

CENTRAL AFRICA.

“WE shall never get round,” said Mark, “just see what a way we have come, and we are not half up one side of the sea yet.

“I wonder how far it is back to the quarry,” said Bevis. “These sedges are so tiresome.”

“We shall never get round,” said Mark, “and I am getting hungry, and Pan is tired of the rushes too.”

Pan, with his red tongue lolling out at one side of his mouth, looked up, showed his white tusks and wagged his tail at the mention of his name. He had ceased to quest about for some time; he had been walking just at their heels in the path they made.

“We *must* go on,” said Bevis, “we *can’t* go back; it is not proper. Travellers like us never go

back. I wish there were no more sedges. Come on."

He marched on again. But now they had once confessed to each other that they were tired, this spurt soon died away, and they stopped again.

"It is as hot as Central Africa," said Mark, fanning himself with his hat.

"I am not sure that we are not in Central Africa," said Bevis. "There are hundreds of miles of reeds in Africa, and as we have crossed the Nile very likely that's where we are."

"It's just like it," said Mark, "I am sure it's Africa."

"Then there ought to be lions in the reeds," said Bevis, "or elephants. Keep your spear ready."

They went on again a little way.

"I want to sit down," said Mark.

"So do I," said Bevis; "in Africa, people generally rest in the middle of the day for fear of sun-strokes."

"So they do; then we ought to rest."

"We can't sit down here," said Bevis; "it is so wet, and it does not smell very nice: we might have the fever, you know, if we stopped still long."

"Let's go to the hedge," said Mark, pointing to

the hedge which surrounded the shore and was a great way on their left hand. "Perhaps there is a prairie there. And I am so thirsty, and there is no water we can drink; give me an apple."

"But we must not go back," said Bevis; "I can't have that; it would never do to let the expedition fail."

"No," said Mark. "But let us sit down first."

Bevis did not quite like to leave the sedges, but he could not gainsay the heat, and he was weary, so they left the rough path and went towards the hedge, pushing through the sedges and rushes. It was some distance, and as they came nearer and the ground very gradually rose and became drier, there was a thick growth of coarse grass between the other plants, and presently a dense mass of reed-grass taller than their shoulders. This was now in bloom, and the pollen covered their sleeves as they forced a way through it. The closer they got to the hedge the thicker the grasses became, and there were now stoles of willow, and tall umbelliferous plants called "gix," which gave out an unpleasant scent as they rubbed against or pushed them down and stepped on them. It was hard work to get through, and when at last they reached the hedge they were almost done up.

Now there was a new difficulty, the hedge had grown so close and thick it was impossible to creep through it. They were obliged to follow it, searching for a gap. They could not see a yard in front, so that they could not tell how far they might have to go. The dust-like pollen flying from the shaken grasses and the flowering plants got inside their nostrils and on the roofs of their mouths and in their throats, causing an unbearable thirst and tickling. The flies, gathering in crowds, teased them, and would not be driven away. Now and then something seemed to sting their necks, and, striking the place with the flat hand, a stoatfly dropped, too bloated with blood, like a larger gnat, to attempt to escape the blow.

Pushing through the plants they stumbled into a hollow which they did not see on account of the vegetation till they stepped over the edge and fell in it. Mark struck his knee against a stone, and limped; Bevis scratched his hands and wrist with a bramble. The hollow was a little wet at the bottom, not water, but soft, sticky mud, which clung to their feet like gum; but they scrambled out of it quickly, not really hurt, but out of breath and angry. They were obliged to sit down, crushing down the grasses, to rest a minute.

"Let's go back to the path in the sedges," said Mark.

"I shan't," said Bevis savagely. He got up and went on a few steps, and then took out his knife. "Couldn't we cut a way through the bushes?" he asked. They went nearer the hedge and looked, but it had been kept thick that cattle might not stray into the marsh. The outside twigs could be cut of course, but hawthorn is hard and close-grained. With such little tools as their pocket-knives it would take hours—very likely they would break them.

"If we only had something to drink," said Mark. They had no more apples. Though it was a marsh, though they were on the shore, there was not a drop of water; if they went back to the sedges they could not get at the water, they would sink to the knees in mud first. The tall reed-grass and "gix," and other plants which so impeded their progress, were not high enough to protect them in the least from the sun. The hedge ran north and south, and at noonday gave no shadow. As they went slowly forward, Mark felt the ground first with his spear to prevent their falling into another hollow. They pulled rushes, and bit the soft white part which was cool to the tongue. But the stalks of plants

and grass, each so easily bent when taken by itself, in the mass like this began to prove stronger than they were.

They had to part them with their arms first, like swimming, and then push through, and the ceaseless resistance wore out their power. Even Bevis at last agreed that it was not possible, they must go back to the path in the sedges on their right. After standing still a minute to recover themselves they turned to the right and went towards the sedges. In about twenty yards Mark, who had been sounding with his spear, touched something that splashed, he stopped and thrust again, there was no mistake, it was water. On going nearer, and feeling for the bottom with the spear, Mark found it was deep too, he could not reach the bottom. The grasses grew right to the edge, and the water itself was so covered with weeds that, had they not prodded the ground before they moved, they would have stepped over the brink into it. The New Sea, receding, had left a long winding pool in a hollow which shut them off from getting to the path in the sedges unless by returning the weary way they had come.

“This is dreadful,” said Mark, when they had followed the water a little distance and were certain

they could not cross. "We can't get out and we can't go back; I am so tired, I can't push through much longer."

"We must go on," said Bevis; "somehow or other we must go on." He too dreaded the idea of returning through the entangled vegetation. It was less dense on the verge of the pool than by the hedge, and by feeling their way with the spear they got on for a while. Thirsty as he was Mark could not drink from the weed-grown water; indeed he could not see the water at all for weeds and green scum, and if he pushed these aside with his spear the surface bubbled with marsh gases. Bevis too persuaded him not to drink it. Slowly they worked on, the marsh on one side, and the hedge on the other.

"Look," said Mark presently. "There's a willow; can't we climb up and see round?"

"Yes," said Bevis; and they changed their course to get to it; it was nearer the hedge. They felt the ground rise, it was two yards higher by the willow, and harder; when the sea came up the spot in fact was an islet. There were bushes on it, brambles, and elder in flower; none of these grow in water itself, but flourish on the edge. There were several tall willow-poles. Bevis put down his bow

and arrows, took off his jacket (the pockets of which were stuffed full of things), took hold of a pole, and climbed up. Mark did the same with another. The poles were not large enough to bear their weight very high ; they got up about six or eight feet.

“There’s Sindbad’s Island,” said Mark, pointing to the right. Far away, beyond the sedges and the reeds, there was a broad strip of clear water, and across it the island of Serendib. “If we only had a canoe.”

“Perhaps we could make one,” said Bevis. “They make them sometimes of willow—and from oak, only we have nothing to cover the framework ; sometimes they weave the rushes so close as to keep out water—”

“I can plait rushes,” said Mark ; “I can plait eight ; but they would not keep out water. What’s over the hedge ?”

They looked that way ; they could see over the thick, close hawthorn, but behind it there rose tall ash-poles, which shut out the view completely.

“It is a thick double-mound,” said Bevis. “There’s ash in the middle ; like that in our field, you know.”

In front they could see nothing but the same endless reed-grass, except that there were more bushes

and willows interspersed among it, showing that there must be numerous banks. Tired of holding on to the poles, which had no boughs of size enough to rest on, they let themselves gradually slide down. As they descended Mark spied a dove's nest in one of the hawthorn bushes ; tired as he was he climbed up the pole again, and looked into it from a higher level. There was an egg in it ; he had half a mind to take it, but remembered that it would be awkward to carry.

"We shall never get home," he said, after he had told Bevis of the nest.

"Pooh," said Bevis. "Here's something for you to drink." He had found a great teasle plant, whose leaves formed cups round the stem. In four of these cups there was a little darkish water, which had been there since the last shower. Mark eagerly sipped from the one which had the most, though it was full of drowned gnats ; it moistened his lips, but he spluttered most of it out again. It was not only unpleasant to the taste but warm.

"I hate Africa," he shouted ; "I *hate* it."

"So do I," said Bevis ; "but we've got to get through it somehow." He started again ; Mark followed sullenly, and Pan came behind Mark. Thus the spaniel, stepping in the track they made, had the

least difficulty of either. Pan's tail drooped, he was very hungry and very thirsty, and he knew it was about the time the dishes were rattling in the kitchen at home.

"Listen," said Mark presently, putting his hand on Bevis's shoulder, and stopping him.

Bevis listened. "I can't hear anything," he said, "except the midsummer hum."

The hum was loud in the air above them, almost shrill, but there was not another sound. Now Mark had called attention to it the noonday silence in that wild deserted place was strange.

"Where are all the things?" said Mark, looking round. "All the birds have gone."

Certainly they could hear none, even the brook-sparrows in the sedges by the New Sea were quiet. There was nothing in sight alive but a few swifts at an immense height above them. Neither wood-pigeon, nor dove, nor thrush called; not even a yellow-hammer.

"I know," whispered Bevis. "I know—they are afraid."

"Afraid?"

"Yes; can't you see Pan does not hunt about?"

"What is it?" asked Mark in an undertone,

grasping his spear tightly. "There are no mummies here?"

"No," said Bevis. "It's the serpent, you know; he's a hundred feet long; he's come over from the Unknown Island, and he's waiting in these sedges somewhere to catch something; the birds are afraid to sing."

"Could he swallow a man?" said Mark.

"Swallow a man," with curling lip. "Swallow a buffalo easily."

"Hush! what's that?" A puff of wind rustled the grasses.

"It's the snake," said Mark, and off he tore. Bevis close behind him, Pan at his heels. In this wild panic they dashed quickly through the grasses, which just before had been so wearisome an obstacle. But the heat pulled them up in ten minutes, panting.

"Did you see him?" said Bevis.

"Just a little bit of him—I think," said Mark.

"We've left him behind."

"He'll find us by our track."

"Let's tie Pan up, and let him swallow Pan."

"Where's a rope? Have you any string? Give me your handkerchief."

They were hastily tying their handkerchiefs

together, when Mark, looking round to see if the monstrous serpent was approaching, shouted,—

“There’s a tree!”

There was a large hollow willow or pollard in the hedge. They rushed to it, they clasped it as shipwrecked men a beam. Mark was first, he got inside on the “touchwood,” and scrambled up a little way, then he worked up, his back against one side, and his knees the other. Bevis got underneath, and “bunted” him up. Bunting is shoving with shoulder or hands. There were brambles on the top; Mark crushed through, and in a minute was firmly planted on the top.

“Give me my spear, and your bow, and your hand,” he said breathlessly.

The spear and the bow were passed up: Bevis followed, taking Mark’s hand just at the last. Mark put the point of his spear downwards to stab the monster. Bevis fitted an arrow to his bow. Pan looked up, but could not climb. They watched the long grasses narrowly, expecting to see them wave from side to side every instant, as the python wound his sinuous way. There was a rustling beneath, but on the other side of the hedge. Bevis looked and saw Pan, who had crept through.

“What are you going to do?” said Mark, as

Bevis slung his bow on his shoulder as if it was a rifle, and began to move out on the hollow top of the tree, which as it became hollow had split, and partly arched over. Bevis did not answer: he crept cautiously out on the top which vibrated under him; then suddenly seizing a lissom bough, he slipped off and let himself down. He was inside the hedge that had so long baffled them. Mark saw in an instant, darted his spear down and followed. So soon as he touched ground, off they set running. There were no sedges here, nothing but short grasses and such herbage as grows under the perpetual shade of ash-poles, and they could run easily. The ease of motion was, in itself, a relief, after the struggle in the reed-grass. When they had raced some distance, and felt safe, they stopped.

“Why, this is a wood!” said Mark, looking round. Ash-stoles and poles surrounded them on every side.

“So it is,” said Bevis. “No, it’s a jungle.”

They walked forward and came to an open space, round about a broad spreading oak.

“I shall sit down here,” said Bevis.

But as they were about to sit down, Pan, who had woke up when he scented rabbits, suddenly disappeared in a hollow.

“What’s that,” said Mark. He went to see, and heard a sound of lapping.

“Water!” shouted Mark, and Bevis came to him. Deep down in a narrow channel there was the merest trickle of shallow water, but running, and clear as crystal. It came from chalk, and it was limpid. Pan could drink, but they could not. His hollow tongue lapped it up like a spoon; but it was too shallow to scoop up in the palm of the hand, and they had no tube of “gix,” or reed, or oat straw, or buttercup stalk to suck through. They sprang into the channel itself, alighting on a place the water did not cover, but with the stream under their feet they could not drink. Nothing but a sparrow could have done so.

Presently Bevis stooped, and with his hands scratched away the silt which formed the bottom, a fine silt of powdered chalk, almost like quicksand, till he had made a bowl-like cavity. The stream soon filled it, but then the water was thick, being disturbed, and they had to wait till it had settled. Then they lapped too, very carefully, with the hollow palm, taking care that the water which ran through their fingers should fall below, and not above the bowl, or the weight of the drops would disturb it again. With perseverance they satisfied their thirst;

then they returned to the oak, and took out their provisions ; they could eat now.

“This is a jolly jungle,” said Mark, with his mouth full.

“That’s a banyan,” said Bevis, pointing with the knuckle-end of the drum-stick he was gnawing at the oak over them. “It’s about eleven thousand years old.”

Then Mark took the drum-stick, and had his turn at it. When it was polished, Pan had it : he cracked it across with his teeth, just as the hyenas did in the cave days, for the animals never learnt to split bones, as the earliest men did. Pan cracked it very disconsolately : his heart was with the fleshpots.

Boom !

They started. It was the same peculiar sound they had heard before, and seemed to come from an immense distance. A pheasant crowed as he heard it in the jungle close by them, and a second farther away.

“What can it be ?” whispered Mark. “Is there anything here ?”—glancing around.

“There may be some genii,” said Bevis quietly. “Very likely there are some genii : they are everywhere. But I do not know what that was. Listen !”

They listened : the wood was still ; so still, they could hear a moth or a chafer entangled in the leaves of the oak overhead, and trying to get out. Looking up there, the sky was blue and clear, and the sunlight fell brightly on the open space by the streamlet. There was nothing but the hum. The long, long summer days seem gradually to dispose the mind to expect something unusual. Out of such an expanse of light, when the earth is tangibly in the midst of a vast illumined space, what may not come ? —perhaps something more than is common to the senses. The mind opens with the enlarging day.

It is said the sandhills of the desert under the noon-day sun emit strange sounds ; that the rocky valleys are vocal ; the primeval forest speaks in its depths ; hollow ocean sends a muttering to the becalmed vessel ; and up in the mountains the bound words are set loose. Of old times the hunters in our own woods met the noonday spirit under the leafy canopy.

Bevis and Mark listened, but heard nothing, except the entangled chafer, the midsummer hum, and, presently, Pan snuffling, as he buried his nostrils in his hair to bite a flea. They laughed at him, for his eyes were staring, and his flexible nostrils turned up as if his face was not alive but

stuffed. The boom did not come again, so they finished their dinner.

"I feel jolly lazy," said Mark. "You ought to put the things down on the map."

"So I did," said Bevis, and he got out his brown paper, and Mark held it while he worked. He drew Fir-Tree Gulf and the Nile.

"Write that there is a deep hole there," said Mark, "and awful crocodiles: that's it. Now Africa—you want a very long stroke there; write reeds and bamboos."

"No, not bamboos, papyrus," said Bevis. "Bamboos grow in India, where we are now. There's some," pointing to a tall wild parsnip, or "gix," on the verge of the streamlet.

"I'm so lazy," said Mark. "I shall go to sleep."

"No you won't," said Bevis. "I ought to go to sleep, and you ought to watch. Get your spear, and now take my bow."

Mark took the bow sullenly.

"You ought to stand up, and walk up and down."

"I can't," said Mark very short.

"Very well; then go farther away, where you can see more round you. There, sit down there."

Mark sat down at the edge of the shadow of the oak. "Don't you see you can look into the channel; if there are any savages they are sure to creep up that channel. Do you see?"

"Yes, I see," said Mark.

"And mind nothing comes behind that woodbine," pointing to a mass of woodbine which hung from some ash-poles, and stretched like a curtain across the view there. "That's a very likely place for a tiger: and keep your eye sharp on those nut-tree bushes across the brook—most likely you'll see the barrel of a matchlock pushed through there."

"I ought to have a matchlock," said Mark.

"So you did; but we had to start with what we had, and it is all the more glory to us if we get through. Now mind you keep awake."

"Yes," said Mark.

Bevis, having given his orders, settled himself very comfortably on the moss at the foot of the oak, tilted his hat aside to shelter him still more, and, with a spray of ash in his hand to ward off the flies, began to forget. In a minute up he started.

"Mark!"

"Yes;" still sulky.

“There’s another oak—no, it’s a banyan up farther; behind you.”

“I know.”

“Well, if you hear any rustle there, it’s a python.”

“Very well.”

“And those dead leaves and sticks in the hole there by the stump of that old tree?”

“I see.”

“There’s a cobra there.”

“All right.”

“And if a shadow comes over suddenly.”

“What’s that, then?” said Mark.

“That’s the roc from Sinbad’s Island.”

“I say, Bevis,” as Bevis settled himself down again. “Bevis, don’t go to sleep.”

“Pooh!”

“But it’s not nice.”

“Rubbish.”

“Bevis.”

“Don’t talk silly.”

In a minute Bevis was fast asleep. He always slept quickly, and the heat and the exertion made him forget himself still quicker.

CHAPTER VII.

THE JUNGLE.

MARK was alone. He felt without going nearer that Bevis was asleep, and dared not wake him lest he should be called a coward. He moved a little way so as to have the oak more at his back, and to get a clearer view on all sides. Then he looked up at the sky, and whistled very low. Pan, who was half asleep too, got up slowly, and came to him; but finding that there was nothing to eat, and disliking to be stroked and patted on such a hot day, he went back to his old place, the barest spot he could find, mere dry ground.

Mark sat, bow and arrow ready in his hand, the arrow on the string, with the spear beside him, and his pocket-knife with the big blade open, and looked into the jungle. It was still and silent. The chafer had got loose, and there was nothing but the hum overhead. He kept the strictest watch, scarce

allowing himself to blink his eyes. Now he looked steadily into the brushwood he could see some distance, his glance found a way through between the boughs, till presently, after he had searched out these crevices, he could command a circle of view.

Like so many slender webs his lines of sight thus drawn through mere chinks of foliage radiated from a central spot, and at the end of each he seemed as if he could feel if anything moved as much as he could see it. Each of these webs strained at his weary mind, and even in the shade the strong glare of the summer noon pressed heavily on his eyelids. Had anything moved, a bird or moth, or had the leaves rustled, it would have relieved him. This expectation was a continual effort. His eyes closed, he opened them, frowned and blinked; then he reclined on one arm as an easier position. His eyes closed, the shrill midsummer hum sounded low and distant, then loud, suddenly it ceased—he was asleep.

The sunburnt woodbine, the oaks dotted with coppery leaves where the second shoot appeared, the ash-poles rising from the hollow stoles, and whose pale sprays touching above formed a green surface, hazel with white nuts, stiff, ragged thistles

on the stream bank, burrs with brown-tipped hooks, the hard dry ground, all silent, fixed, held in the light.

The sun slipped through the sky like a yacht under the shore where the light wind coming over a bank just fills the sails, but leaves the surface smooth. Through the smooth blue the sun slipped silently, and no white fleck of foam cloud marked his speed. But in the deep narrow channel of the streamlet there was a change—the tiny trickle of water was no longer illumined by the vertical beams, a slight slant left it to run in shadow.

Burr! came a humble-bee whose drone was now put out as he went down among the grass and leaves, now rose again as he travelled. Burr! The faintest breath of air moved without rustling the topmost leaves of the oaks. The humble-bee went on, and disappeared behind the stoles.

A little flicker of movement happened among the woodbine, not to be seen of itself, but as a something interrupting the light like a larger mote crossing the beam. The leaves of the woodbine in one place were drawn together and coated with a white web and a tiny bird came to take away the destroyer. Then mounting to a branch of ash he sang, "Sip, sip—chip, chip!"

Again the upper leaves of the oak moved and jostling together caused a slight sound. Coo ! coo ! there was a dove beyond the hazel bushes across the stream. The shadow was more aslant and rose up the stalks of the rushes in the channel. Over the green surface of the ash sprays above, the breeze drew and rippled it like water. A jay came into the farther oak and scolded a distant mate.

Presently Pan awoke, nabbed another flea, looked round and shook his ears, from which some of the hair was worn by continual rubbing against the bushes under which he had crept for so many years. He felt thirsty, and remembering the stream, went towards it, passing very lightly by Bevis, so closely as to almost brush his hat. The slight pad, pad of his paws on the moss and earth conveyed a sense of something moving near him to Bevis' mind. Bevis instantly sat up, so quickly, that the spaniel, half alarmed, ran some yards.

Directly Bevis sat up he saw that Mark had fallen asleep. He thought for a moment, and then took a piece of string from his pocket. Stepping quietly up to Mark he made a slip-knot in the string, lifted Mark's arm and put his hand through the loop above the wrist, then he jerked it tight. Mark

scrambled up in terror—it might have been the python :—

“ O ! I say ! ”

Before he could finish, Bevis had dragged him two or three steps towards an ash-pole, when Mark, thoroughly awake, jerked his arm free, though the string hung to it.

“ How dare you ? ” said Bevis, snatching at the string, but Mark pushed him back. “ How dare you ? you’re a prisoner.”

“ I’m not,” said Mark very angrily.

“ Yes, you are ; you were asleep.”

“ I don’t care.”

“ I will tie you up.”

“ You shan’t.”

“ If you sleep at your post, you have to be tied to a tree, you know you have, and be left there to starve.”

“ I won’t.”

“ You must, or till the tigers have you. Do you hear ? stand still ! ”

Bevis tried to secure him, Mark pushed him in turn.

“ You’re a wretch.”

“ I hate you ! ”

“ I’ll kill you ! ”

“I’ll shoot you !”

Mark darted aside and took his spear; Bevis had his bow in an instant and began to draw it. Mark, knowing that Bevis would shoot his hardest, ran for the second oak. Bevis in his haste pulled hard, but let the arrow slip before he could take aim. It glanced upon a bough and shot up nearly straight into the air, gleaming as it went—a streak of light—in the sunshine. Mark stopped by the oak, and before Bevis could fetch another arrow poised his spear and threw it. The spear flew direct at the enemy, but in his haste Mark forgot to throw high enough, he hurled it point-blank, and the hardened point struck the earth and chipped up crumbling pieces of dry ground; then it slid like a serpent some way through the thin grasses.

Utterly heedless of the spear, which in his rage he never saw, Bevis picked up an arrow from the place where he had slept, fitted the notch to the string and looked for Mark, who had hidden behind the other oak. Guessing that he was there, Bevis ran towards it, when Mark shouted to him,—

“Stop! I say, it’s not fair; I have nothing, and you’ll be a coward.”

Bevis paused, and saw the spear lying on the ground.

“Come and take your spear,” he said directly; “I won’t shoot.” He put his bow on the ground. Mark ran out, and had his spear in a moment. Bevis stooped to lift his bow, but suddenly in his turn cried,—

“Stop! Don’t throw; I want to say something.”

Mark, who had poised his spear, put it down again on the grass.

“We ought not to fight now,” said Bevis. “You know we are exploring, people never fight then, else the savages kill those who are left; they wait till they get home, and then fight.”

“So they do,” said Mark; “but I shall not be left tied to a tree.”

“Very well, not this time. Now we must shake hands.”

They shook hands, and Pan, seeing that there was now no danger of a chance knock from a flying stick, came forth from the bush where he had taken shelter.

“But you want everything your own way,” said Mark sulkily.

“Of course I do,” said Bevis, glaring at him, “I’m captain.”

“But you do when you are not captain.”

“You are a big story.”

"I'm not."

"You are."

"I'm not."

"People are not to contradict me," said Bevis, looking very defiant indeed, and standing bolt upright. "I say I am captain."

Mark did not reply, but picked up his hat, which had fallen off. Without another word each gathered up his things, then came the question which way to go? Bevis would not consult his companion; his companion would not speak first. Bevis shut his lips very tight, pressing his teeth together; he determined to continue on and try and get round the New Sea. He was not sure, but fancied they should do so by keeping somewhat to the right. He walked to the channel of the stream, sprang across it, and pushing his way through the hazel bushes, went in that direction; Mark followed silently, holding his arm up to stop the boughs which as Bevis parted them swung back sharply.

After the hazel bushes there was fairly clear walking between the ash-poles and especially near the oak-trees, each of which had an open space about it. Bevis went as straight as he could, but had to wind in and out round the stoles and sometimes to make a curve when there was a thick bramble bush in the

way. As they passed in Indian file under some larger poles, Mark suddenly left the path and began to climb one of them. Bevis stopped, and saw that there was a wood-pigeon's nest. The bird was on the nest, and though she felt the ash-pole tremble as Mark came up, hand over hand, cracking little dead twigs, though her nest shook under her, she stayed till his hand almost touched it. Then she flew up through the pale green ash sprays, and Mark saw there were two eggs, for the sticks of which the nest was made were so thinly put together that, now the bird was gone, he could see the light through, and part of the eggs lying on them.

He brought one of the eggs down in his left hand, sliding down the pole slowly not to break it. The pure white of the wood-pigeon's egg is curiously and delicately mottled like the pores of the finest human skin. The enamel of the surface, though smooth and glossy, has beneath it some water-mark of under texture like the arm of the Queen of Love, glossy white and smooth, yet not encased, but imperceptibly porous to that breath of violet sweetness which announces the goddess. The sunlight fell on the oval as Mark, without a moment's pause, took a pin from the hem of his jacket and blew the egg.

So soon as he had finished, Bevis went on again,

and came to some hawthorn bushes, through which they had much trouble to push their way, receiving several stabs from the long thorns. As it was awkward with the egg in his hand, Mark dropped it.

There was a path beyond the hawthorn, very little used, if at all, and green, but still a path—a trodden line—and Bevis went along it, as it seemed to lead in the direction he wished. By the side of the path he presently found a structure of ash sticks, and stopped to look at it. At each end four sticks were driven into the ground, two and two, the tops crossing each other so as to make a small V. Longer sticks were laid in these V's, and others across at each end.

“It’s a little house,” said Mark, forgetting the quarrel. “Here’s some of the straw on the ground; they thatch it in winter and crawl under.” (It was about three feet high.)

“I don’t know,” said Bevis.

“I’m sure it is,” said Mark. “They are little men, the savages who live here, they’re pigmies, you know.”

“So they are,” said Bevis, quite convinced, and likewise forgetting his temper. “Of course they are, and that’s why the path is so narrow. But I believe it’s not a house, I mean not a house to live

in. It's a place to worship at, where they have a fetich."

"I think it's a house," said Mark.

"Then where's the fireplace?" asked Bevis decidedly.

"No more there is a fireplace," said Mark thoughtfully. "It's a fetich-place."

Bevis went on again, leaving the framework behind. Across those bars the barley was thrown in autumn for the pheasants, which feed by darting up and dragging down a single ear at a time; thus by keeping the barley off the ground there is less waste. They knew this very well.

"Bevis," said Mark presently.

"Yes."

"Let's leave this path."

"Why?"

"Most likely we shall meet some savages—or perhaps a herd of wild beasts, they rush along these paths in the jungle and crush over everything—perhaps elephants."

"So they do," said Bevis, and hastily stepped out of the path into the wood again. They went under more ash-poles where the pigeons' nests were numerous; they counted five all in sight at once, and only a few yards apart, for they could not see

far through the boughs. Some of the birds were sitting, others were not. Mark put up his spear and pushed one off her nest. There was a continual fluttering all round them as the pigeons came down to, or left their places. Never had they seen so many nests—they walked about under them for a long time, doing nothing but look up at them, and talk about them.

“I know,” said Bevis, “I know—these savages here think the pigeons sacred, and don’t kill them—that’s why there are so many.”

Not much looking where they were going, they came out into a space where the poles had been cut in the winter, and the stoles bore only young shoots a few feet high. There was a single waggon track, the ruts overhung with grasses and bordered with rushes, and at the end of it, where it turned, they saw a cock pheasant. They tried to go through between the stoles, but the thistles were too thick and the brambles and briars too many; they could flourish here till the ash poles grew tall and kept away the sun. So they followed the waggon track, which led them again under the tall poles.

To avoid the savages they kept a very sharp lookout, and paused if they saw anything. There was a huge brown crooked monster lying asleep in one

place, they could not determine whether an elephant or some unknown beast, till, creeping nearer from stole to bush and bush to stole, they found it to be a thrown oak, from which the bark had been stripped, and the exposed sap had dried brown in the sun. So the vast iguanodon may have looked in primeval days when he laid him down to rest in the brushwood.

“When shall we come to the New Sea again?” said Mark presently, as they were moving more slowly through a thicker growth.

“I cannot think,” said Bevis. “If we get lost in this jungle, we may walk and walk and walk and never come to anything except banyan-trees, and cobras, and tigers, and savages.”

“Are you sure we have been going straight?”

“How do I know?”

“Did you follow the sun?” asked Mark.

“No, indeed, I did not; if you walk towards the sun you will go round and round, because the sun moves.”

“I forgot. O! I know, where’s the compass?”

“How stupid!” said Bevis. “Of course it was in my pocket all the time.”

He took it out, and as he lifted the brazen lid the white card swung to and fro with the vibration of his hand.

“Rest your hand against a pole,” said Mark. This support steadied Bevis’s hand, and the card gently came to a standstill. The north, with the three feathers, pointed straight at him.

“Now, which way was the sea?” said Mark, trying to think of the direction in which they had last seen it. “It was that side,” he said, holding out his right hand; he faced Bevis.

“Yes, it was,” said Bevis. “It was on the right hand, now that would be east” [to Mark], “so if we go east we must be right.”

He started with the compass in his hand, keeping his eye on it, but then he could not see the stoles or bushes, and walked against them, and the card swung so he could not make a course.

“What a bother it is,” he said, stopping, “the card won’t keep still. Let me see!” He thought a minute, and as he paused the three feathers settled again. “There’s an oak,” he said. “The oak is just east. Come on.” He went to the oak, and then stopped again.

“I see,” said Mark, watching the card till it stopped. “The elder bush is east now.”

They went to the elder bush and waited: there was a great thistle east next, and afterwards a bough which had fallen. Thus they worked a bee-

line, very slow but almost quite true. The ash-poles rattled now as the breeze freshened and knocked them together.

“What a lot of leaves,” said Bevis presently; “I never saw such a lot.”

“And they are so deep,” said Mark. They had walked on dead leaves for some little while before they noticed them, being so eagerly engaged with the compass. Now they looked the ground was covered with brown beech leaves, so deep, that although their feet sunk into them, they could not feel the firm ground, but walked on a yielding substance. A thousand woodcocks might have thrown them over their heads and hidden easily had it been their time of year. The compass led them straight over the leaves, till in a minute or two they saw that they were in a narrow deep coombe. It became narrower and with steeper sides till they approached the end, when the chalk showed not white but dull as it crumbled, the flakes hanging at the roots of minute plants.

“I don’t like these leaves,” said Mark. “There may be a cobra, and you can’t see him; you may step on him without knowing.”

Hastily he and Bevis scrambled a few feet up the chalky side; the danger was so obvious they rushed

to escape it before discussing. When they had got over this alarm, they found the compass still told them to go on, which they could not do without scaling the coombe. They got up a good way without much trouble, holding to hazel boughs, for the hazel grows on the steepest chalk cliffs, but then the chalk was bare of all but brambles, whose creepers came down towards them; why do bramble creepers, like water, always come down hill? Under these the chalk was all crumbled, and gave way under the foot, so that if they put one foot up higher it slipped with their weight, and returned them to the same level.

Two rabbits rushed away, and were lost beneath the brambles. Without conscious thinking they walked aslant, and so gained a few feet every ten yards, and then came to a spot where the crust of the top hung over, and from it the roots of beech trees came curving down into the hollow space in search of earth. To one of these they clung by turns, some of the loose chalky clods fell on them, but they hauled themselves up over the projecting edge. Bevis went first, and took all the weapons from Mark; Pan went a long way round.

At the summit there was a beautiful beech-tree, with an immense round trunk rising straight up,

and they sat down on the moss, which always grows at the foot of the beech, to rest after the struggle up. As they sat down they turned round facing the cliff, and both shouted at once,—

“The New Sea !”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WITCH.

THE blue water had lost its glitter, for they were now between it and the sun, and the freshening breeze, as it swept over, darkened the surface. They were too far to see the waves, but that they were rising was evident since the water no longer reflected the sky like a mirror. The sky was cloudless, but the water seemed in shadow, rough and hard. It was full half a mile or more down to where the wood touched the shore of the New Sea and shut out their view, so that they could not tell how far it extended. Serendib and the Unknown Island were opposite, and they could see the sea all round them from the height where they sat.

“We left the sea behind us,” said Mark. “The compass took us right away from it.”

“We began wrong somehow,” said Bevis. In fact they had walked in a long curve, so that when

they thought the New Sea was on Mark's right, it was really on his left hand. "I must put down on the map that people must go west, not east, or they will never get round."

"It must be thousands of miles round," said Mark; "thousands and thousands."

"So it is," said Bevis, "and only to think nobody ever saw it before you and me."

"What a long way we can see," said Mark, pointing to where the horizon and the blue wooded plain below, beyond the sea, became hazy together. "What country is that?"

"I do not know; no one has ever been there."

"Which way is England?" asked Mark.

"How can I tell when I don't know where we are?"

The ash sprays touching each other formed a green surface beneath them, extending to the right and left—a green surface into which every now and then a wood-pigeon plunged, closing his wings as the sea-birds dive into the sea. They sat in the shadow of the great beech, and the wind, coming up over the wood, blew cool against their faces. The swallows had left the sky, to go down and glide over the rising waves below.

"Come on," said Bevis, incapable of rest unless

he was dreaming. "If we keep along the top of the hill we shall know where we are going, and perhaps see a way round presently."

They followed the edge of the low cliff as nearly as they could, walking under the beeches where it was cool and shady, and the wind blew through. Twice they saw squirrels, but they were too quick, and Bevis could not get a shot with his bow.

"We ought to take home something," said Mark. "Something wonderful. There ought to be some pieces of gold about, or a butterfly as big as a plate. Can't you see something?"

"There's a dragon-fly," said Bevis. "If we can't catch him, we can say we saw one made of emerald, and here's a feather."

He picked up a pheasant's feather. The dragon-fly refused to be caught, he rushed up into the air nearly perpendicularly; and seeing another squirrel some way ahead, they left the dragon-fly and crept from beech trunk to beech trunk towards him.

"It's a red squirrel," whispered Mark. "That's a different sort." In summer the squirrels are thought to have redder fur than in winter. Mark stopped now, and Bevis went on by himself; but the squirrel saw Pan, who had run along and came out beyond him. Bevis shot as the squirrel rushed up a tree; and his

arrow struck the bark, quivered a moment, and stuck there.

The savages will see some one has been hunting," said Mark. "They are sure to see that arrow."

In a few minutes they came to some hazel bushes, and pushing through these there was a lane under them in a hollow ten feet deep. They scrambled down and followed it, and came to a boulder-stone, on which some specks sparkled in the sunshine, so that they had no doubt it was silver ore. Round a curve of the lane they emerged on the brow of a green hill, very steep; they had left the wood behind them. The trees from here hid the New Sea, and in front, not far off, rose the Downs.

"What are those mountains?" asked Mark.

"The Himalayas, of course," said Bevis. "Let's go to them."

They went along the brow, it was delicious walking there, for the sun was now much lower, and the breeze cool, and beneath them were meadows, and a brook winding through. But suddenly they came to a deep coombe—a nullah.

"Look!" said Mark, pointing to a chimney just under them. The square top, blackened by soot, stood in the midst of apple-trees, on whose boughs

the young green apples showed. The thatch of the cottage was concealed by the trees.

“A hut!” said Bevis.

“Savages!” said Mark, “I know, I’ll pitch a stone down the chimney, and you get your bow ready, and shoot them as they rush out.”

“Capital!” said Bevis. Mark picked up a flint, and “chucked” it—it fell very near the chimney, they heard it strike the thatch and roll down. Mark got another, and most likely, having found the range, would have dropped it into the chimney this time, when Bevis stopped him.

“It may be a witch,” he said. “Don’t you know what John told us? if you pitch a stone down a witch’s chimney it goes off bang! and the stone shoots up into the air like a cannon-ball.”

“I remember,” said Mark. “But John is a dreadful story. I don’t believe it.”

“No, no more do I. Still we ought to be careful. Let’s creep down and look first.”

They got down the hillside with difficulty, it was so steep and slippery—the grass being dried by the sun. At the bottom there was a streamlet running along deep in a gully, a little pool of the clearest water to dip from, and a green sparrow wicket-gate in a hawthorn hedge about the garden. Peering

cautiously through the gate they saw an old woman sitting under the porch beside the open door, with a black teapot on the window-ledge close by, and a blue teacup, in which she was soaking a piece of bread, in one hand.

“It’s a witch,” whispered Mark. “There’s a black cat by the wall-flowers—that’s a certain sign.”

“And two sticks with crutch-handles,” said Bevis. “But just look there.” He pointed to some gooseberry bushes loaded with the swelling fruit, than which there is nothing so pleasant on a warm, thirsty day. They looked at the gooseberries, and thirsted for them; then they looked at the witch.

“Let’s run in and pick some, and run out quick,” whispered Mark.

“You stupid; she’d turn us into anything in a minute.”

“Well—shoot her first,” said Mark. “Take steady aim; John says if you draw their blood they can’t do anything. Don’t you remember, they stuck the last one with a prong.”

“Horrid cruel,” said Bevis.

“So it was,” said Mark; “but when you want gooseberries.”

“I wish we had some moly,” said Bevis; “you know, the plant Ulysses had. Mind before we start next time we must find some. Who knows what fearful magic people we might meet?”

“It was stupid not to think of it,” said Mark. “Do you know, I believe she’s a mummy.”

“Why?”

“She hasn’t moved; and I can’t see her draw her breath.”

“No more she does. This is a terrible place.”

“Can we get away without her seeing?”

“I believe she knows we’re here now, and very likely all we have been saying.”

“Did she make that curious thunder we heard?”

“No; a witch isn’t strong enough; it wants an enchanter to do that.”

“But she knows who did it?”

“Of course she does. There, she’s moved her arm; she’s alive. Aren’t those splendid gooseberries?”

“I’ll go in,” said Bevis; “you hold the gate open, so that I can run out.”

“So I will; don’t go very near.”

Bevis fitted an arrow to the string, and went up the garden path. But as he came near, and saw how peaceful the old lady looked, he removed the

arrow from the string again. She took off her spectacles as he came up; he stopped about ten yards from her.

“Mrs. Old Woman, are you a witch?”

“No, I bean’t a witch,” said the old lady; “I wishes I was; I’d soon charm a crock o’ gold.”

“Then, if you are not a witch, will you let us have some gooseberries? here’s sixpence.”

“You med have some if you want’s ’em; I shan’t take yer money.”

“What country is this?” said Bevis, going closer, as Mark came up beside him.”

“This be Calais.”

“Granny, don’t you know who they be?” said a girl, coming round the corner of the cottage. She was about seventeen, and very pretty, with the bloom which comes on sweet faces at that age. Though they were but boys they were tall, and both handsome; so she had put a rose in her bosom. “They be Measter Bevis and Measter Mark. You know, as lives at Longcot.”

“Aw, to be sure.” The old lady got up and curtsyed. “You’ll come in, won’t ’ee?”

They went in and sat down on chairs on the stone floor. The girl brought them a plate of the gooseberries and a jug of spring-water. Bevis had

not eaten two before he was up and looking at an old gun in the corner; the barrel was rusty, the brass guard tarnished, the ramrod gone, still it was a gun.

“Will it go off?” he said.

“Feyther used to make un,” said the girl.

Next he found a big black book, and lifted up the covers, and saw a rude engraving of a plant.

“Is that a magic book?” said he.

“I dunno,” she replied. “Mebbe. Granny used to read un.”

It was an old herbal.

“Can’t you read?” said Bevis.

The girl blushed and turned away.

“A’ be a lazy wench,” said the old woman. “A’ can’t read a mossel.”

“I bean’t lazy.”

“You be.”

Bevis, quite indifferent to that question, was peering into every nook and corner, but found nothing more.

“Let’s go,” said he directly.

Mark would not stir till he had finished the gooseberries.

“Tell me the way round the—the—” he was going to say sea, but recollected that they would

not be able to understand how he and Mark were on an expedition, nor would he say pond—"round the water," he said.

"The Longpond?" said the girl. "You can't go round, there's the marsh—not unless you goes back to Wood Lane, and nigh handy your place."

"Which way did 'ee come?" asked the old woman.

"They come through the wood," said the girl. "I seen um; and they had the spannul."

She was stroking Pan, who loved her, as she had fed him with a bone. She knew the enormity of taking a strange dog through a wood in the breeding-season.

"How be um going to get whoam?" said the old woman.

"We're going to walk, of course," said Bevis.

"It's four miles."

"Pooh! We've come thousands. Come on, Mark; we'll get round somehow."

But the girl convinced him after a time that it was not possible, because of the marsh and the brook, and showed him too how the shadows of the elms were lengthening in the meadow outside the garden at the foot of the hill. Bevis reluctantly decided

that they must abandon the expedition for that day, and return home. The girl offered to show them the way into the road. She led them by a narrow path beside the streamlet in the gully, and then along the steep side of the hill, where there were three or four more cottages, all built on the slope, steep as it was. The path in front of the doors had a kind of breastwork, that folk might not inadvertently tumble over and roll—if not quite sober—into the gully beneath. Yet there were small gardens behind, which almost stood up on end, the vegetables appearing over the roofs.

Upon the breastwork or mound they had planted a few flowers, all yellow, or yellow-tinged, marigolds, sunflowers, wall-flowers, a stray tulip, the gaudiest they knew. These specks of brightness by the dingy walls and grey thatch and whitened turf, for the chalk was but an inch under, came of instinct on that southern slope, as hot Spain flaunts a yellow flag.

Six or eight children were about. One sat crying in the midst of the path, so unconscious under the wrong he had endured as not to see them, and they had to step right over his red head. Some stared at them with unchecked rudeness; one or two curtsied or tugged at their forelocks. The hap-

piest of all was sitting on the breastwork (of dry earth) eating a small turnip from which he had cut the dirt and rind with a rusty table-knife. As they passed he grinned and pushed the turnip in their faces, as much as to say, "Have a bite." Two or three women looked out after they had gone by, and then some one cried, "Baa!" making a noise like a sheep, at which the girl who led them flushed up, and walked very quickly, with scorn and rage, and hatred flashing in her eye. It was a taunt. Her father was in gaol for lamb-stealing. Her name was Aholibah, and they taunted her by dwelling on the last syllable.

The path went to the top of the hill, and round under a red barn, and now they could see the village, of which these detached cottages were an outpost, scattered over the slope, and on the plain on the other side of the coombe, a quarter of a mile distant.

"There's the windmill," said the girl, pointing to the tower-like building. "You go tow-ward he. He be on the road. Then you turn to the right till you comes to the handing-post. Then you go to the left, and that'll take 'ee straight whoam."

"Thank you," said Bevis. "I know now; it's

not far to Big Jack's house. Please have this sixpence," and he gave her the coin, which he had unconsciously held in his hand ever since he had taken it out to pay for the gooseberries. It was all he had; he could not keep his money.

She took it, but her eyes were on him, and not on the money; she would have liked to have kissed him. She watched them till she saw they had got into the straight road, and then went back, but not past the cottages.

They found the road very long, very long and dull, and dusty and empty, except that there was a young labourer—a huge fellow—lying across a flint heap asleep, his mouth open and the flies thick on his forehead. Bevis pulled a spray from the hedge and laid it gently across his face. Except for the sleeping labourer, the road was vacant, and every step they took they went slower and slower. There were no lions here, or monstrous pythons, or anything magic.

"We shall never get home," said Mark.

"I don't believe we ever shall," said Bevis; "I hate this road."

While they yawned and kicked at stray flints, or pelted the sparrows on the hedge, a dog-cart came swiftly up behind them. It ran swift and smooth

and even balanced, the slender shafts bending slightly like the spars of a yacht.

It was drawn by a beautiful chestnut mare, too powerful by far for many, which struck out with her fore-feet as if measuring space and carrying the car of a god in the sky, throwing her feet as if there were no road but elastic air beneath them. The man was very tall and broad and sat upright—a wonderful thing in a countryman. His head was broad like himself, his eyes blue, and he had a long thick yellowy beard. The reins were strained taut like a yacht's cordage, but the mare was in the hollow of his strong hand.

They did not hear the hoofs till he was close, for they were on a flint heap, searching for the best to throw.

“It's Jack,” said Mark.

Jack looked them very hard in the face, but it did not seem to dawn upon him who they were till he had gone past a hundred yards, and then he pulled up and beckoned. He said nothing but tapped the seat beside him. Bevis climbed up in front, Mark knelt on the seat behind—so as to look in the direction they were going. They drove two miles and Jack said nothing, then he spoke:—

“Where have you been?”

“To Calais.”

“Bad—bad,” said Jack. “Don’t go there again.” At the turnpike it took him three minutes to find enough to pay the toll. He had a divine mare, his harness, his cart were each perfect. Yet for all his broad shoulders he could barely muster up a groat. He pulled up presently when there were but two fields between them and the house at Longcot; he wanted to go down the lane, and they alighted to walk across the fields. After they had got down and were just turning to mount the gate, and the mare obeying the reins had likewise half turned, Jack said,—

“Hum!”

“Yes,” said Mark from the top bar.

“How are they all at home?” i.e. at Mark’s.

“Quite well,” said Mark.

“All?” said Jack again.

“Frances bruised her arm—”

“Much?” anxiously.

“You can’t see it—her skin’s like a plum,” said Mark; “if you just pinch it it shows.”

“Hum!” and Jack was gone.

Late in the evening they tried hard to catch the donkey, that Mark might ride home. It was not far, but now the day was over he was very tired,

so too was Bevis. Tired as they were, they chased the donkey up and down—six times as far as it was to Mark's house—but in vain, the moke knew them of old, and was not to be charmed or cowed. He showed them his heels, and they failed. So Mark stopped and slept with Bevis, as he had done so many times before. As they lay awake in the bedroom, looking out of the window opposite at a star, half awake and half asleep, suddenly Bevis started up on his arm.

“Let's have a war,” he said.

“That would be first-rate,” said Mark, “and have a great battle.”

“An awful battle,” said Bevis, “the biggest and most awful ever known.”

“Like Waterloo?” said Mark.

“Pooh!”

“Agincourt?”

“Pooh!”

“Mal—Mal,” said Mark, trying to think of Malplaquet.

“Oh! more than anything,” said Bevis; “somebody will have to write a history about it.”

“Shall we wear armour?”

“That would be bow and arrow time. Bows and arrows don't make any banging.”

"No more they do. It wants lots of banging and smoke—else its nothing."

"No; only chopping and sticking."

"And smashing and yelling."

"No—and that's nothing."

"Only if we have rifles," said Mark thoughtfully; "you see, people don't see one another; they are so far off, and nobody stands on a bridge and keeps back all the enemy all by himself."

"And nobody has a triumph afterwards with elephants and chariots, and paints his face vermillion."

"Let's have bow and arrow time," said Mark; "it's much nicer—and you sell the prisoners for slaves and get heaps of money, and do just as you like, and plough up the cities that don't please you."

"Much nicer," said Bevis; "you very often kill all the lot and there's nothing silly. I shall be King Richard and have a battle-axe—no, let's be the Normans."

"Wouldn't King Arthur do?"

"No; he was killed, that would be stupid. I've a great mind to be Charlemagne."

"Then I shall be Roland."

"No; you must be a traitor."

“But I want to fight your side,” said Mark.

“How many are there we can get to make the war?”

They consulted, and soon reckoned up fourteen or fifteen.

“It will be jolly awful,” said Mark; “there will be heaps of slain.”

“Let’s have Troy,” said Bevis.

“That’s too slow,” said Mark; “it lasted ten years.”

“Alexander the Great—let’s see; whom did he fight?”

“I don’t know; people nobody ever heard of—nobody particular, Indians and Persians and all that sort.”

“I know,” said Bevis; “of course! I know. Of course I shall be Julius Cæsar!”

“And I shall be Mark Antony.”

“And we will fight Pompey.”

“But who shall be Pompey?” said Mark.

“Pooh! there’s Bill, and Wat, and Ted; anybody will do for Pompey.”

CHAPTER IX.

SWIMMING.

“PUT your hands on the rail. Hold it as far off as you can. There—now let the water lift your feet up behind you.”

Bevis took hold of the rail, which was on a level with the surface, and then leaning his chest forward upon the water, felt his legs and feet gradually lifted up, till he floated. At first he grasped the rail as tight as he could, but in a minute he found that he need not do so. Just to touch the rail lightly was enough, for his extended body was as buoyant as a piece of wood. It was like taking a stick and pressing it down to the bottom, and then letting it go, when it would shoot up directly. The water felt deliciously soft under him, bearing him up far more gently than the grass, on which he was so fond of lying.

“Mark!” he shouted. “Do like this. Catch hold of the rail—it’s capital!”

Mark, who had been somewhat longer undressing than impatient Bevis, came in and did it, and there they both floated, much delighted. The water was between three and four feet deep. When Bevis's papa found that they could not be kept from roaming, and were bent on boating on the Longpond, which was a very different thing to the shallow brook, where they were never far from shore, and out of which they could scramble, he determined to teach Bevis and his friend to swim. Till Bevis could swim, he should never feel safe about him ; and unless his companion could swim too, it was of no use, for in case of accident, one would be sure to try and save the other, and perhaps be dragged down.

They had begged very hard to be allowed to have one of the boats in order to circumnavigate the New Sea, which it was so difficult to walk round ; and he promised them if they would really try and learn to swim, that they should have the boat as a reward. He took them to a place near the old quarry they had discovered, in one corner of Fir-Tree Gulf, where the bottom was of sand, and shelved gently for a long way out ; a line of posts and rails running into the water, to prevent cattle straying, as they could easily do where it was shallow like this. The field there, too, was away from any

road, so that they could bathe at all times. It was a sunny morning, and Bevis, eager for his lesson, had torn off his things, and dashed into the water, like Pan.

“Now try one hand,” said his “governor.” “Let one hand lie on the water—put your arm out straight—and hold the rail with the other.”

Bevis, rather reluctantly, did as he was told. He let go with his right hand, and stretched it out,—his left hand held him up just as easily, and his right arm seemed to float of itself on the surface. But now, as the muscles of his back and legs unconsciously relaxed, his legs drew up under him, and he bottomed with his feet and stood upright.

“Why’s that?” he said. “Why did I come up like that?”

“You must keep yourself a little stiff,” said the governor; “not rigid—not quite stiff—just feel your muscles then.”

Bevis did it again, and floated with one hand only on the rail: he found he had also to keep his left arm quite straight and firm. Then he had to do it with only two fingers on; while Mark and the governor stood still, that no ripple might enter his mouth, which was only an inch above the surface. Next, Mark was taken in hand, and learnt the same

things ; and having seen Bevis do it, he had not the least difficulty. The governor left them awhile to practise by themselves, and swam across to the mouth of the Nile, on the opposite side of the gulf. When he came back he found they had got quite confident ; so confident, that Bevis, thinking to surpass this simple lesson, had tried letting go with both hands, when his chin immediately went under, and he struggled up spluttering.

The governor laughed. “ I thought you would do that,” he said. “ You only want a little—a very little support, just two fingers on the rail ; but you must have some, and when you swim you have to supply it by your own motion. But you see how little is wanted.”

“ I see,” said Bevis. “ Why, we can very nearly swim now—can’t we, Mark ? ”

“ Of course we can,” said Mark, kicking up his heels and making a tremendous splash.

“ Now,” said the governor, “ come here ; ” and he made Bevis go on his knees in shallow water, and told him to put both hands on the bottom. He did so ; and when he was on all fours, facing the shore, the water only reached just above his elbow, which was not deep enough, so he had to move backwards till it touched his chest. He had then to extend his

legs behind him, till the water lifted them up, while his hands remained on the bottom. His chest rested on the water, and all his body was buoyed up in the same pleasant way as when he had hold of the rail.

By letting his arms bend or give a little, he could tell exactly how much the water would bear him up, exactly how strong it was under him. He let himself sink till his chin was in the water and it came half-way to his lower lip, while he had his head well back, and looked up at the sycamore-trees growing in the field above the quarry. Then he floated perfectly, and there seemed not the least pressure on his hands; there was a little, but so little it appeared nothing, and he could fancy himself swimming.

“Now walk along with your hands,” said the governor.

Bevis did so; and putting one hand before the other, as a tumbler does standing on his head, moved with ease, his body floating, and having no weight at all. One hand would keep him, or even one finger when he put it on a stone at the bottom so that it did not sink in as it would have done into the sand; but if he extended his right arm, it had a tendency to bring his toes down to the bottom. Mark did the same thing, and there they crawled about in the shallow water on their hands only, and

the rest floating, laughing at each other. They could hardly believe that it was the water did it; it kept them up just as if they were pieces of wood. The governor left them to practise this while he dressed, and then made them get out, as they had been in long enough for one morning.

“Pan does not swim like you do,” said Mark, as they were walking home.

“No,” said the governor, “he paddles; he runs in the water the same as he does on land.”

“Why couldn’t we do that?” asked Mark.

“You can, but it is not much use: you only get along so slowly. When you can swim properly, you can copy Pan in a minute.”

The governor could not go with them again for two days on account of business; but full of their swimming, they looked in the old bookcase, and found a book in which there were instructions, and among other things they read that the frog was the best model. Out they ran to look for a frog; but as it was sunny there were none visible, till Mark remembered there was generally one where the ivy of the garden wall had spread over the ground in the corner.

In that cool place they found one, and Bevis picked it up. The frog was cold to the touch even in the summer day, so they put it on a cabbage-

leaf and carried it to the stone trough in the yard. No sooner did it feel the water than the frog struck out and crossed the trough, first in one direction, and then in another, afterwards swimming all round close to the sides, but unable to land, as the stone was to it like a wall.

“He kicks,” said Mark, leaning over the trough; “he only kicks; he doesn’t use his arms.”

The frog laid out well with his legs, but kept his forelegs, or arms, still, or nearly so.

“Now, what’s the good of a frog?” said Bevis; “men don’t swim like that.”

“It’s very stupid,” said Mark; “he’s no model at all.”

“Not a bit.”

The frog continued to go round the trough much more slowly.

“No use watching him.”

So they went away, but before they had gone ten yards Bevis ran back.

“He can’t get out,” he said; and placing the cabbage-leaf under the frog, he lifted the creature out of the trough and put him on the ground. No sooner was the frog on the ground than he went under the trough in the moist shade there, for the cattle as they drank splashed a good deal over.

When they told the governor, he said that what they had noticed was correct, but the frog was a good model in two things nevertheless ; first in the way he kicked, and secondly in the way he leaned his chest on the water. But a man had to use his arms so as to balance his body and keep his chin and mouth from going under, besides the assistance they give as oars to go forward.

Next morning they went to the bathing-place again. Bevis had now to hold the rail as previously, but when he had got it at arm's length he was told to kick like the frog.

“Draw your knees up close together and kick, and send your feet wide apart,” said the governor. Bevis did so, and the thrust of his legs sent him right up against the rail. He did this several times, and was then ordered to go on hands and knees in the shallow water, just as he had done before, and let his legs float up. When they floated he had to kick, to draw his knees up close together, and then strike his feet back wide apart. The thrust this time lifted his hands off the bottom on which they had been resting, lifted them right up, and sent him quite a foot nearer the shore. His chest was forced against the water like an inclined plane, and he was thus raised an inch or so. When the im-

pulse ceased he sank as much, and his hands touched the bottom once more.

This pleased him greatly—it was quite half-swimming; but he found it necessary to be careful while practising it that there were no large stones on the bottom, and that he did not get in too shallow water, else he grazed his knees. In the water you scarcely feel these kind of hurts, and many a bather has been surprised upon getting out to find his knees or legs bruised, or even the skin off, from contact with stones or gravel, of which he was unaware at the time.

Mark had no difficulty in doing the same, it was even easier for him, as he had only to imitate, which is not so hard as following instructions. The second, indeed, often learns quicker than the first. They kicked themselves along in fine style.

“Keep your feet down,” said the governor; “don’t let them come above the surface, and don’t splash. Mark, you are not drawing your knees up, you are only lifting your heels; it makes all the difference.”

He then made them hold on to the rail in the deepest water they could fathom—standing himself between them and the deeper water—and after letting their legs float, ordered them to kick there,

but to keep their arms straight and stiff, not to attempt to progress, only to practise the kick. The object was that they might kick deep and strong, and not get into a habit of shallow kicking, as they might while walking on their hands on the sand. All that lesson they had to do nothing but kick.

In a day or two they were all in the water again, and after a preliminary splashing, just to let off their high spirits—otherwise they would not pay attention—serious business began.

“Now,” said the governor, “you must begin to use your arms. You are half-independent of touching the bottom already—you can feel that you can float without your feet touching anything; now you must try to float altogether. You know the way I use mine.”

They had seen him many times, and had imitated the motion on shore, first putting the flat hands together, thumb to thumb; the thumbs in their natural position, and not held under the palm; the tips of the thumbs crossing (as sculls cross in sculling); the fingers together, but not squeezed tight, a little interstice between them matters nothing, while if always squeezed tight it causes a strain on the wrist. The flat hands thus put together held four to six inches in front of the breast, and then

shot out—not with a jerk, quick, but no savage jerk, which wastes power—and the palms at the extremity of the thrust turned partly aside, and more as they oar the water till nearly vertical.

Do not attempt a complete sweep—a complete half-circle—oar them round as far as they will go easily without an effort to the shoulders, and then bring them back. The object of not attempting a full sweep is that the hands may come back easily, and without disturbing the water in front of the chest and checking progress, as they are apt to do. They should slip back, and then the thumbs being held naturally, just as you would lay your flat hand on the table, they do not meet with resistance as they do if held under the palm. If the fingers are kept squeezed tight together when the hands are brought back to the chest, should they vary a hair's breadth from a level position they stop progress exactly like an oar held still in the water, and it is very difficult to keep them absolutely level. But if the fingers are the least degree apart, natural, if the hand inclines a trifle, the fingers involuntarily open and the water slips through, besides which, as there is no strain, the hands return level with so much greater ease. The thrust forward is so easy—it is learnt in a moment—you can imitate

it the first time you see it—that the bringing back is often thought of no account. In fact, the bringing back is *the* point, and if it be not studied you will never swim well. This he had told them from time to time on shore, and they had watched him as he swam slowly by them, on purpose that they might observe the manner. But to use the arms properly on shore, when they pass through air and meet with no resistance, is very different to using them properly in the water.

Bevis had to stand facing the shore in water as deep as his chest; then to stoop a little—one foot in front of the other for ease—till his chin nearly rested on the surface, and then to strike out with his arms. He was not to attempt anything with his feet, simply to stand and try the stroke. He put his flat hands together, pushed them out, and oared them round as he had often done on land. As he oared them round they pushed him forward, so that he had to take a step on the bottom; they made him walk a step forward. This he had to repeat twenty times, the governor standing by, and having much trouble to make him return his hands to his chest without obstructing his forward progress.

Bevis became very impatient now to swim arms

and legs together; he was sure he could do it, for his arms, as they swept back, partly lifted him up and pushed him on.

“Very well,” said the governor. “Go and try. Here, Mark.”

He took Mark in hand, but before they had had one trial Bevis had started to swim, and immediately his head went under unexpectedly, so that he came up spluttering, and had to sit on the rail till he could get the water out of his throat. While he sat there in no good temper Mark had his lesson. The governor then went for a swim himself, being rather tired of reiterating the same instructions, leaving them to practise. On his return—he did not go far, only just far enough to recover his patience—he set them to work at another thing.

Bevis had to go on his hands on the bottom as he had done before, and let his limbs float behind. Then he was told to try striking out with the right hand, keeping the left on the sand to support himself. He did so, and as his arm swept back it pushed him forward just as an oar would a boat. The next time he did it he kicked with his legs at the same moment, and the impetus of the kick and the motion of his right arm together lifted his left hand

momentarily off the bottom, and sent him along. This he did himself without being told, the idea of doing so would occur to any one in the same position.

“That’s right,” said the governor. “Do that again.

Bevis did it again and again, and felt now that he was three-parts swimming; he swam with his legs, and his right arm, and only just touched the bottom with his left hand. After he had repeated it six or seven times he lifted his left hand a little way, and made a quarter stroke with it too, and then jumped up and shouted that he could swim.

Mark had to have his lesson some yards away, for Bevis had so splashed the water in his excitement that it was thick with the sand he had disturbed. Bevis continued his trials, raising his left arm a little more every time till he could very nearly use both together. They were then both set to work to hold on to the rail, let their limbs float, and strike out with one arm, alternately left and right, kicking at the same moment. This was to get into the trick of kicking and striking out with the hands together. Enough had now been done for that morning.

They came up again the next day, and the governor

left them this time almost to themselves to practise what they had learnt. They went on their hands on the sand, let their limbs float, and by degrees began to strike out with both hands, first lifting the left hand a few inches, then more, till presently, as they became at home in the water, they could nearly use both.

The next time they bathed the governor set Bevis a fresh task. He was made to stand facing the shore in water as deep as his chest, then to lean forward gently on it—without splash—and to strike out with both his arms and legs together. He did it immediately, at the first trial, but of course stood up directly. Next he was told to try and make two strokes—one is easily made, but the difficulty is when drawing up the knees and bringing the hands back for the second stroke. The chin is almost certain to go under, and some spluttering to follow. Bevis did his best, and held his breath, and let his head go down well till he drew some water up his nostrils, and was compelled to sit on the rail and wait till he could breathe properly again.

Mark tried with exactly the same result. The first stroke when the feet pushed from the ground was easy; but when he endeavoured to draw up his knees for the second, down went his head.

The only orders they received were to keep on trying.

Two days afterwards they bathed again, but though they asked the governor to tell them something else he would not do so, he ordered them to try nothing but the same thing over and over again, to face the shore and strike out. If they liked they could push forward very hard with their feet, if it was done without splash, and the impetus would last through two strokes, and help to keep the body up while they drew up their knees for the second stroke. Then he went for a swim across to the Nile and left them.

They tried their very hardest, and then went on their hands on the sand to catch the idea of floating again. After that they succeeded, but so nearly together that neither could claim to be first. They pushed off from the ground hard, struck out, drew up their knees and recovered their hands, and made the second stroke. They had to hold their breath while they did it, for their mouths *would* go under, but still it was done. Shouting to the governor to come back they threw themselves at the water, bold as spaniels dashing in, wild with delight.

"You can swim," said the governor as he approached.

“Of course we can,” said Bevis, rushing out in the field for a dance on the sward, and then back splash into the water again. That morning they could hardly be got away from it, and insisted on bathing next day whether convenient or not, so the governor was obliged to accompany them. This time he took the punt, and let them row him to the bathing-place. The lake was too deep there for poling. They had been in boats with him before, and could row well; it is remarkable that there is nothing both boys and girls learn so quickly as rowing. The merest little boy of five years old will learn to handle an oar in a single lesson. They grounded the punt and undressed on the sward where there was more room.

“Now,” said the governor, as they began to swim their two strokes again, “now do this—stand up to your chest, and turn towards the rail, and when you have finished the second stroke catch hold of it.”

Bevis found that this was not so easy as it sounded, but after five or six attempts he did it, and then of his own motion stood back an extra yard and endeavoured to swim three strokes, and then seize it. This was very difficult and he could not manage it that morning. Twice more the governor came with them and they had the punt, and on the second

time they caught the third stroke. They pushed off, that was one stroke, swam one good stroke while floating, and made a third partly complete stroke, and seized the rail.

“That will do,” said the governor. He was satisfied: his object from the beginning had been so to teach them that they could teach themselves. With a band beneath the chest he could have suspended them (one at a time) from the punt in deep water, and so taught them, but he considered it much better to let them gradually acquire a knowledge of how far the water would buoy them up, and where it would fail to do so, so as to become perfectly confident, but not *too* confident. For water, however well you can swim, is not a thing to be played with. They had seen now that everything could be done in water no deeper than the chest, and even less than that, so that he had reason to believe if left to themselves they would not venture further out till quite competent. He had their solemn promise not to go into deeper water than their shoulders. If you go up to your chin, the slightest wavelet will lift you off your feet, and in that way many too venturesome people have been drowned not twelve inches from safety.

They might go to their shoulders, always on con-

dition of facing the shore and swimming towards it. When they thought they could swim well enough to go out of their depth he would come and watch. Both promised most faithfully, and received permission to go next time by themselves, and in a short while, if they kept their word, they should have the boat.

If any ladies should chance to read how Bevis and Mark learnt to swim, when they are at the seaside will they try the same plan? Choose a smooth sea and a low tide (only to have it shallow). Kneel in the water. Place the hands on the sand, so that the water may come almost over the shoulders—not quite, say up to them. Then let the limbs and body float. The pleasant sense of suspension without effort will be worth the little trouble it costs. On the softest couch the limbs feel that there is something solid, a hard framework beneath, and so the Sybarites put cushions on the floor under the feet of their couches. On the surface of the buoyant sea there is nothing under the soft couch. They will find that there is no pressure on the hands. They have no weight. Now let them kick with both feet together, and the propulsion will send them forward.

Next use one arm in swimming style. Next use one arm and kick at the same time. Try to use

both arms, lifting the hand from the sand a little first, and presently more. Stand up to the chest in water, stoop somewhat and bend the knee, one foot in front of the other, and use the arms together, walking at the same time, so as to get the proper motion of the hands. Place the hands on the sand again, and try to use both arms once more.

Finally, stand up to the chest, face the shore, lean forward, and push off and try a stroke—the feet will easily recover themselves. Presently two strokes will become possible, after awhile three; that is swimming. The sea is so buoyant, so beautiful, that let them only once feel the sense of floating, and they will never rest till they have learned. Ladies can teach themselves so quickly, and swim better than we do. The best swimming I ever saw was done by three ladies together: the waves were large, but they swam with ease, the three graces of the sea.

CHAPTER X.

SAVAGES.

BEVIS and Mark went eagerly to bathe by themselves, but immediately left the direct path. Human beings must be kept taut, or, like a rope, they will slacken. The very first morning they took a leaping-pole with them, a slender ash sapling, rather more than twice their own height, which they picked out from a number in the rick-yard, intending to jump to and fro the brook on the way. But before they had got half way to the brook they altered their minds, becoming eager for the water, and raced to the bathing-place. The pole was now to be an oar, and they were to swim, supported by an oar, like shipwrecked people.

So soon as he had had a plunge or two, Bevis put one arm over the pole and struck out with the other, thinking that he should be able in that way to have a long swim. Directly his weight pressed on the

pole it went under, and did not support him in the least. He put it next beneath his chest, with both arms over it, but immediately he pushed off down it went again. Mark took it and got astride, when the pole let his feet touch the bottom.

"It's no use," he said. "What's the good of people falling overboard with spars and oars? What stories they must tell."

"I can't make it out," said Bevis; and he tried again, but it was no good, the pole was an encumbrance instead of a support, for it insisted upon slipping through the water lengthways, and would not move just as he wished. In a rage he gave it a push, and sent it ashore, and turned to swimming to the rail. They did not know it, but the governor, still anxious about them, had gone round a long distance, so as to have a peep at them from the hedge on the other side of Fir-Tree Gulf by the Nile. He could tell by the post and rails that they did not go out of their depth, and went away without letting them suspect his presence.

When they got out, they had a run in the sunshine, which dried them much better than towels. The field sloped gently to the right, and their usual run was on the slope beside a nut-tree hedge towards a group of elms. All the way there and back the

sward was short and soft, almost like that of the Downs which they could see, and dotted with bird's-foot lotus, over whose yellow flowers they raced. But this morning, being no longer kept taut, after they had returned from the elms with an enormous mushroom they had found there, they ran to the old quarry, and along the edge above. The perpendicular sandcliff fell to an enclosed pool beneath, in which, on going to the very edge, they could see themselves reflected. Some hurdles and flakes—a stronger kind of hurdle—had been placed here that cattle might not wander over, but the cart-horses, who rub against everything, had rubbed against them and dislodged two or three. These had rolled down, and the rest hung half over.

While they stood still looking down over the broad waters of their New Sea, the sun burned their shoulders, making the skin red. Away they ran back to dress, and taking a short path across a place where the turf had partly grown over a shallow excavation pricked their feet with thistles, and had to limp the rest of the way to their clothes. Now, there were no thistles on their proper race-course down to the elms and back.

As they returned home they remembered the brook, and went down to it to jump with the leaping-

pole. But the soft ooze at the bottom let the pole sink in, and Bevis, who of course must take the first leap, was very near being hung up in the middle of the brook. Under his weight, as he sprang off, the pole sank deep into the ooze, and had it been a stiffer mud the pole would have stopped upright, when he must have stayed on it over the water, or have been jerked off among the flags. As it was it did let him get over, but he did not land on the firm bank, only reaching the mud at the side, where he scrambled up by grasping the stout stalk of a willow-herb. In future he felt with the butt of the pole till he found a firm spot, where it was sandy, or where the matted roots of grasses and flags had bound the mud hard. Then he flew over well up on the grass.

Mark took his turn, and as he put the butt in the water a streak of mud came up where a small jack fish had shot away. So they went on down the bank leaping alternately, one carrying the towels while the other flew over and back.

Sometimes they could not leap because the tripping was bad, undermined where cowslips in the spring hung over the stream, bored with the holes of water-rats, which when disused become covered with grass, but give way beneath the foot or the

hoof that presses on them pitching leaper or rider into the current, or it was rotten from long-decaying roots, or about to slip. Sometimes the landing was bad, undermined in the same way, or higher than the tripping, when you have not only to get over, but to deliver yourself on a higher level ; or swampy, where a wet furrow came to the brook ; or too far, where there was nothing but mud to come on. They had to select their jumping-places, and feel the ground to the edge first.

“Here’s the raft !” shouted Mark, who was ahead, looking out for a good place.

“Is it ?” said Bevis, running along on the other side. They had so completely forgotten it, that it came upon them like something new. Bevis took a leap and came over, and they set to work at once to launch it. The raft slipped gradually down the shelving shore of the drinking-place, and they thrust it into the stream. Bevis put his foot on board, but immediately withdrew it, for the water rushed through twenty leaks, spurting up along the joins. Left on the sand in the sun’s rays the wood of the raft shrank a little, opening the planking, while the clay they had daubed on to caulk the crevices had cracked, and the moss had dried up and was ready to crumble. The water came through every-

where, and the raft was half-full even when left to itself without any pressure.

“We ought to have thatched it,” said Mark. “We ought to have made a roof over it. Let’s stop the leaks.”

“O! come on,” said Bevis, “don’t let’s bother. Rafts are no good, no more than poles or oars when you fall overboard. We shall have a ship soon.”

The raft was an old story, and he did not care about it. He went on with the leaping-pole, but Mark stayed a minute and hauled the raft on shore as far as his strength would permit. He got about a quarter of it on the ground, so that it could not float away, and then ran after Bevis.

They went into the Peninsula, and looked at all the fir-trees, to see if any would do for a mast for the blue boat they were to have. As it had no name, they called it the blue boat to distinguish it from the punt. Mark thought an ash-pole would do for the mast, as ash-poles were so straight and could be easily shaved to the right size; but Bevis would not hear of it, for masts were never made of ash, but always of pine, and they must have their ship proper. He selected a tree presently, a young fir, straight as an arrow, and started Mark for the axe, but before he had gone ten yards Mark came

back, saying that the tree would be of no use unless they liked to wait till next year, because it would be green, and the mast ought to be made of seasoned wood.

“So it ought,” said Bevis. “What a lot of trouble it is to make a ship.”

But as they sat on the railing across the isthmus swinging their legs, Mark remembered that there were some fir-poles which had been cut a long time since behind the great wood-pile, between it and the walnut-trees, out of sight. Without a word away they ran, chose one of these and carried it into the shed where Bevis usually worked. They had got the dead bark off and were shaving away when it was dinner-time, which they thought a bore, but which wise old Pan, who was never chained now, considered the main object of life.

Next morning as they went through the meadow, where the dew still lingered in the shade, on the way to the bathing-place, taking Pan with them this time, they hung about the path picking clover-heads and sucking the petals, pulling them out and putting the lesser ends in their lips, looking at the white and pink bramble flowers, noting where the young nuts began to show, pulling down the wood-bine, and doing everything but hasten on to their

work of swimming. They stopped at the gate by the New Sea, over whose smooth surface slight breaths of mist were curling, and stood kicking the ground and the stones as flighty horses paw.

"We ought to be something," said Mark discontentedly.

"Of course we ought," said Bevis. "Things are very stupid unless you are something."

"Lions and tigers," said Mark, growling, and showing his teeth.

"Pooh!"

"Shipwrecked people on an island."

"Fiddle! They have plenty to do and are always happy, and we are not."

"No; very unhappy. Let's try escaping—prisoners running away."

"Hum! Hateful!"

"Everything's hateful."

"So it is."

"This is a very stupid sea."

"There's nothing in it."

"Nothing anywhere."

"Let's be hermits."

"There's always only one hermit."

"Well, you live that side" (pointing across),
"and I'll live this."

“ Hermits eat pulse and drink water.”

“ What’s pulse ?”

“ I suppose it’s barley water.”

“ Horrid.”

“ Awful.”

“ You say what we shall be then.”

“ Pan, you old donk,” said Bevis, rolling Pan over with his foot. Lazy Pan lay on his back, and let Bevis bend his ribs with his foot.

“ Caw, caw ! ” a crow went over down to the shore, where he hoped to find a mussel surprised by the dawn in shallow water.

Bang ! “ Hoi ! Hoo ! Yah ! ” The discharge was half a mile away, but the crow altered his mind, and flew over the water as near the surface as he could without touching. Why do birds always cross the water in that way ?

“ That’s Tom,” said Mark. Tom was the bird-keeper. He shot first, and shouted after. He potted a hare in the corn with bits of flint, a button, three tin tacks, and a horse-stub, which scraped the old barrel inside, but slew the game. That was for himself. Then he shouted his loudest to do his duty—for other people. The sparrows had flown out of the corn at the noise of the gun, and settled on the hedge ; when Tom shouted they were frightened

from the hedge, and went back into the wheat. From which learn this, shoot first and shout after.

“ Shall we say that was a gun at sea ? ” continued Mark.

“ They are always heard at night,” said Bevis. “ Pitch black, you know.”

“ Everything is somehow else,” said Mark.

Pan closed his idle old eyes, and grunted with delight as Bevis rubbed his ribs with his foot. Bevis put his hands in his pockets and sighed deeply. The sun looked down on these sons of care, and all the morning beamed.

“ Savages ! ” shouted Mark kicking the gate to with a slam that startled Pan up. “ Savages, of course ! ”

“ Why ? ”

“ They swim, donk : don’t they ? They’re always in the water, and they have catamarans and ride the waves and dance on the shore, and blow shells—”

“ Trumpets ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Canoes ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ No clothes ? ”

“ No.”

“ All jolly ? ”

“ Everything. ”

“ Hurrah ! ”

Away they ran towards the bathing-place to be savages, but Mark stopped suddenly, and asked what sort they were ? ' They decided that they were the South Sea sort, and raced on again, Pan keeping pace with a kind of shamble ; he was too idle to run properly. They dashed into the water, each with a wood-pigeon's feather, which they had found under the sycamore-trees above the quarry, stuck in his hair. At the first dive the feathers floated away. Upon the other side of the rails there was a large aspen-tree whose lowest bough reached out over the water, which was shallow there.

Though they made such a splashing when Bevis looked over the railings a moment, he saw some little roach moving to and fro under the bough. The wavelets from his splashing rolled on to the sandy shore, rippling under the aspen. As he looked, a fly fell on its back out of the tree, and struggled in vain to get up. Bevis climbed over the rails, picked an aspen leaf, and put it under the fly, which thus on a raft, and tossed up and down as Mark dived, was floated slowly by the undulations to the strand. As he got over the rails a kingfisher shot out

from the mouth of the Nile opposite, and crossed aslant the gulf, whistling as he flew.

“Look!” said Mark. “Don’t you know that’s a ‘sign.’ Savages read ‘signs,’ and those birds mean that there are heaps of fish.

“Yes, but we ought to have a proper language.”

“Kalabala-blong!” said Mark.

“Hududu-blow-fluz!” replied Bevis, taking a header from the top of the rail on which he had been sitting, and on which he just contrived to balance himself a moment without falling backwards.

“Umplumum!” he shouted, coming up again.

“Ikiklikah,” and Mark disappeared.

“Noklikah,” said Bevis, giving him a shove under as he came up to breathe.

“That’s not fair,” said Mark, scrambling up.

Bevis was swimming, and Mark seized his feet. More splashing and shouting, and the rocks resound. The echo of their voices returned from the quarry and the high bank under the firs.

They raced presently down to the elms along the sweet soft turf, sprinkling the dry grass with the sparkling drops from their limbs, and the sunlight shone on their white shoulders. The wind blew and stroked their gleaming backs. They rolled and tumbled on the grass, and the earth was under

them. From the water to the sun and the wind and the grass.

They played round the huge sycamore trunks above the quarry, and the massive boughs stretched over—from a distance they would have seemed mere specks beneath the immense trees. They raced across to a round hollow in the field and sat down at the bottom, so that they could see nothing but the sky overhead, and the clouds drifting. They lay at full length, and for a moment were still and silent; the sunbeam and the wind, the soft touch of the grass, the gliding cloud, the eye-loved blue gave them the delicious sense of growing strong in drowsy luxury.

Then with a shout, renewed, they ran, and Pan who had been waiting by their clothes was startled into a bark of excitement at their sudden onslaught. As they went homewards they walked round to the little sheltered bay where the boats were kept, to look at the blue boat and measure for the mast. It was beside the punt, half drawn up on the sand, and fastened to a willow root. She was an ill-built craft with a straight gunwale, so that when afloat she seemed lower at stem and stern than abeam, as if she would thrust her nose into a wave instead of riding it. The planks were thick and

heavy and looked as if they had not been bent enough to form the true buoyant curve.

The blue paint had scaled and faded, the rowlocks were mended with a piece cut from an old rake-handle, there was a small pool of bilge water in the sternsheets from the last shower, full of dead insects, and yellow willow leaves. A clumsy vessel put together years ago in some by-water of the far distant Thames above Oxford, and not good enough even for that unknown creek. She had drifted somehow into this landlocked pond and remained unused, hauled on the strand beneath the willows; she could carry five or six, and if they bumped her well on the stones it mattered little to so stout a frame.

Still she was a boat, with keel and curve, and like lovers they saw no defect. Bevis looked at the hole in the seat or thwart, where the mast would have to be stepped, and measured it (not having a rule with him) by cutting a twig just to the length of the diameter. Mark examined the rudder and found that the lines were rotten, having hung dangling over the stern in the water for so long. Next they stepped her length, stepping on the sand outside, to decide on the height of the mast, and where were the ropes to be

fastened? for they meant to have some standing rigging.

At home afterwards in the shed, while Bevis shaved the fir-pole for the mast, Mark was set to carve the leaping-pole, for the South Sea savages have everything carved. He could hardly cut the hard dried bark of the ash, which had shrunk on and become like wood. He made a spiral notch round it, and then searched till he found his old spear, which had to be ornamented and altered into a bone harpoon. A bone from the kitchen was sawn off while in the vice, and then half through two inches from the largest end. Tapping a broad chisel gently, Mark split the bone down to the sawn part, and then gradually filed it sharp. He also filed three barbs to it, and then fitted the staff of the spear into the hollow end. While he was engraving lines and rings on the spear with his pocket-knife, the dinner interrupted his work.

Bevis, wearying of the mast, got some flints, and hammered them to split off flakes for arrowheads, but though he bruised his fingers, he could not chip the splinters into shape. The fracture always ran too far, or not far enough. John Young, the labourer, came by as he was doing this sitting on the stool in the shed, and watched him.

"I see a man do that once," said John.

"How did he do it? tell me? what's the trick?" said Bevis, impatient to know.

"Aw, I dunno; I see him at it. A' had a gate-hinge snopping um."

The iron hinge of a gate, if removed from the post, forms a fairly good hammer, the handle of iron as well as the head.

"Where was it? what did he do it for?"

"Aw, up in the Downs. Course he did it to sell um."

The prehistoric art of chipping flints lingered among the shepherds on the Downs, till the percussion-cap came in, and no longer having to get flakes for the flintlock guns they slowly let it disappear. Young had seen it done, but could not describe how.

Bevis battered his flints till he was tired; then he took up the last and hurled it away in a rage with all his might. The flint whirled over and over and hummed along the ground till it struck a small sarsen or boulder by the wood-pile, put there as a spur-stone to force the careless carters to drive straight. Then it flew into splinters with the jerk of the stoppage.

"Here's a sharp 'un," said John Young, picking up a flake, "and here's another."

Altogether there were three pointed flakes which Bevis thought would do. Mark had to bring some reeds next day from the place where they grew half a mile below his house in a by-water of the brook. They were green, but Bevis could not wait to dry them. He cut them off a little above the knot or joint, split the part above, and put the flint flake in, and bound it round and round with horse-hair from the carter's store in the stable. But when they were finished, they were not shot off, lest they should break; they were carried indoors into the room upstairs where there was a bench, and which they made their armoury.

They made four or five darts next of deal shaved to the thickness of a thin walking-stick, and not quite so long. One end was split in four—once down and across that—and two pieces of cardboard doubled up thrust in, answering the purpose of feathering. There was a slight notch two-thirds up the shaft, and the way was to twist a piece of twine round it there crossed over a knot so as just to hold, the other end of the twine firmly coiled about the wrist, so that in throwing the string was taut and the point of the dart between the fingers. Hurling it the string imparted a second force, and the dart, twirling like an arrow, flew fifty or sixty yards.

Slings they made with a square of leather from the sides of old shoes, a small hole cut out in the centre that the stone might not slip, but these they could never do much with, except hurl pebbles from the rick-yard, rattling up into the boughs of the oak, on the other side of the field. The real arrows to shoot with—not the reed arrows to look at—were tipped with iron nails filed to a sharp point. They had much trouble in feathering them; they had plenty of goose-feathers (saved from the Christmas plucking), but to glue them on properly was not easy.

CHAPTER XI.

SAVAGES CONTINUED—THE CATAMARAN.

WITH all their efforts, they could not make a blow-tube, such as are used by savages. Bevis thought and thought, and Mark helped him, and Pan grabbed his fleas, all together in the round blue summer-house ; and they ate a thousand strawberries, and a basketful of red currants, ripe, from the wall close by, and two young summer apples, far from ready, and yet they could not do it. The tube ought to be at least as long as the savage, using it, was tall. They could easily find sticks that were just the thickness, and straight, but the difficulty was to bore through them. No gimlet or auger was long enough ; nor could they do it with a bar of iron, red-hot at the end ; they could not keep it true, but always burned too much one side or the other.

Perhaps it might be managed by inserting a

short piece of tin tubing, and making a little fire in it, and gradually pushing it down as the fire burnt. Only, as Bevis pointed out, the fire would not live in such a narrow place without any draught. A short tube was easily made out of elder, but not nearly long enough. The tinker, coming round to mend the pots, put it into their heads to set him to make a tin blow-pipe, five feet in length ; which he promised to do, and sent it in a day or two. But as he had no sheet of tin broad enough to roll the tube in one piece, he had made four short pipes and soldered them together. Nothing would go straight through it because the joints were not quite perfect, inside there was a roughness which caught the dart and obstructed the puff, for a good blow-tube must be as smooth and well bored as a gun-barrel.

When they came to look over their weapons, they found they had not got any throw-sticks, nor a boomerang. Throw-sticks were soon made, by cutting some with a good thick knob ; and a boomerang was made out of a curved branch of ash, which they planed down smooth one side, and cut to a slight arch on the other.

“This is a capital boomerang,” said Bevis.
“Now we shall be able to knock a rabbit over

without any noise, or frightening the rest, and it will come back and we can kill three or four running."

"Yes, and one of the mallards," said Mark. "Don't you know?—they are always too far for an arrow, and besides, the arrow would be lost if it did not hit. Now we shall have them. But which way ought we to throw it—the hollow first, or the bend first?"

"Let's try," said Bevis, and ran with the boomerang from the shed into the field.

Whiz! Away it went, bend first, and rose against the wind till the impetus ceased, when it hung a moment on the air, and slid to the right, falling near the summer-house. Next time it turned to the left, and fell in the hedge; another time it hit the hay-rick: nothing could make it go straight. Mark tried his hardest, and used it both ways, but in vain—the boomerang rose against the wind, and, so far, acted properly, but directly the force with which it was thrown was exhausted, it did as it liked, and swept round to the left or the right, and never once returned to their feet.

"A boomerang is a stupid thing," said Bevis, "I shall chop it up. I hate it."

"No; put it upstairs," said Mark, taking it

from him. So the boomerang was added to the collection in the bench-room. A crossbow was the next thing, and they made the stock from a stout elder branch, because when the pith was taken out, it left a groove for the bolt to slide up. The bow was a thick briar, and the bolt flew thirty or forty yards, but it did not answer, and they could hit nothing with it. A crossbow requires delicate adjustment, and to act well, must be made almost as accurately as a rifle.

They shot a hundred times at the sparrows on the roof, who were no sooner driven off than they came back like flies, but never hit one; so the crossbow was hung up with the boomerang. Bevis, from much practice, could shoot far better than that with his bow and arrow. He stuck up an apple on a stick, and after six or seven trials hit it at twenty yards. He could always hit a tree. Mark was afraid to throw his bone-headed harpoon at a tree, lest the head should break off; but he had another, without a bone head, to cast; and he too could generally hit a tree.

“Now we are quite savages,” said Bevis, one evening, as they sat up in the bench-room, and the sun went down red and fiery, opposite the little window, filling the room with a red glow and

gleaming on their faces. It put a touch of colour on the pears, which were growing large, just outside the window, as if they were ripe towards the sunset. The boomerang on the wall was lit up with the light; so was a parcel of canvas, on the floor, which they had bought at Latten town, for the sails of their ship.

There was an oyster barrel under the bench, which was to contain the fresh water for their voyage, and there had been much discussion as to how they were to put a new head to it.

"We ought to see ourselves on the shore with spears and things when we are sailing round," said Mark.

"So as not to be able to land for fear."

"Poisoned arrows," said Mark. "I say, how stupid! we have not got any poison."

"No more we have. We must get a lot of poison."

"Curious plants nobody knows anything about but us."

"Nobody ever heard of them."

"And dip our arrows and spears in the juice."

"No one ever gets well after being shot with them."

"If the wind blows hard ashore and there are no

harbours it will be awful with the savages all along waiting for us.”

“We shall see them dancing and shouting with bows and throw-sticks, and yelling.”

“That’s you and me.”

“Of course. And very likely if the wind is very hard we shall have to let down the sails, and fling out an anchor and stay till the gale goes down.”

“The anchor may drag.”

“Then we shall crash on the rocks.”

“And swim ashore.”

“You can’t. There’s the breakers and the savages behind them. I shall stop on the wreck, and the sun will go down.”

“Red like that,” pointing out of window.

“And it will blow harder still.”

“Black as pitch.”

“Horrible.”

“No help.”

“Fire a gun.”

“Pooh ! ”

“Make a raft.”

“The clouds are sure to break, or something.”

“I say,” said Bevis, “won’t all these things”—pointing to the weapons—“do first-rate for our war ? ”

“Capital. There will be arrows sticking up everywhere all over the battle-field.”

“Broken lances and horses without riders.”

“Dints in the ground.”

“Knights with their backs against trees and heaps of soldiers chopping at them.”

“Flashing swords! the ground will shake when we charge.”

“Trumpets!”

“Groans!”

“Grass all red!”

“Blood-red sun like that!” The disc growing larger as it neared the horizon shone vast through some distant elms.

“Flocks of crows.”

“Heaps of white bones.”

“And we will take the shovels and make a tumulus by the shore.”

The red glow on the wall slowly dimmed, the colour left the pear, and the song of a thrush came from the orchard.

“I want to make some magic,” said Bevis, after a pause. “The thing is to make a wand.”

“Genii are best,” said Mark. “They do anything you tell them.”

“There ought to be a black book telling you how

to do it somewhere," said Bevis; "but I've looked through the bookcase and there's nothing."

"Are you sure you have quite looked through?"

"I'll try again," said Bevis. "There's a lot of books, but never anything that you want."

"I know," said Mark suddenly. "There's the bugle in the old cupboard—that will do for the war."

"So it will; I forgot it."

"And a flag."

"No; we must have eagles on a stick."

Knock! They jumped; Polly had hit the ceiling underneath with the handle of a broom.

"Supper."

When they went to bathe next morning, Bevis took with him his bow and arrows, intending to shoot a pike. As they walked beside the shore they often saw jacks basking in the sun at the surface of the water, and only a few yards distant. He had fastened a long thin string one end to the arrow and the other to the bow, so that he might draw the arrow back to him with the fish on as the savages do. Mark brought his bone-headed harpoon to try and spear something, and between them they also carried a plank, which was to be used as a catamaran.

A paddle they had made was tied to it for convenience, that their hands might not be too full. Mark went first with one end of the plank on his shoulder, and Bevis followed with the other on his, and as they had to hold it on edge it rather cut them. Coming near some weeds where they had seen a jack the day before, they put the catamaran down, and Bevis crept quietly forward. The jack was not there, but motioning to Mark to stand still, Bevis went on to where the first railings stretched out into the water.

There he saw a jack about two pounds' weight basking within an inch of the surface, and aslant to him. He lifted his bow before he went near, shook out the string that it might slip easily like the coil of a harpoon, fitted the arrow, and holding it almost up, stole closer. He knew if he pulled the bow in the usual manner the sudden motion of his arms would send the jack away in an instant. With the bow already in position, he got within six yards of the fish, which, quite still, did not seem to see anything, but to sleep with eyes wide open in the sun. The shaft flew, and like another arrow the jack darted aslant into deep water.

Bevis drew back his arrow with the string, not altogether disappointed, for it had struck the water

very near if not exactly at the place the fish had occupied. But he thought the string impeded the shaft, and took it off for another trial. Mark would not stay behind; he insisted upon seeing the shooting, so leaving the catamaran on the grass, they moved gently along the shore. After a while they found another jack, this time much larger, and not less than four pounds' weight, stationary in a tiny bay, or curve of the land. He was lying parallel to the shore, but deeper than the first, perhaps six inches beneath the surface. Mark stood where he could see the dark line of the fish, while Bevis, with the bow lifted and arrow half drawn, took one, two, three, and almost another step forward.

Aiming steadily at the jack's broad side, just behind the front fins, where the fish was widest, Bevis grasped his bow firm to keep it from the least wavering (for it is the left hand that shoots), drew his arrow, and let go. So swift was the shaft, unimpeded, and drawn too this time almost to the head, in traversing the short distance between, that the jack, quick as he was, could not of himself have escaped. Bevis saw the arrow enter the water, and, as it seemed to him, strike the fish. It did indeed strike the image of the fish, but the real jack slipped beneath it.

Bevis looked and looked, he was so certain he had hit it, and so he had hit the mark he aimed at, which was the refraction, but the fish was unhurt. It was explained to him afterwards that the fish appears higher in the water than it actually is, and that to have hit it he should have aimed two inches underneath, and he proved the truth of it by trying to touch things in the water with a long stick. The arrow glanced after going two feet or so deep, and performed a curve in the water exactly opposite to that it would have traced in the air. In the air it would have curved over, in the water it curved under, and came up to the surface not very far out; the water checked it so. Bevis fastened the string again to another arrow, and shot it out over the first, so that it caught and held it, and he drew them both back.

They fetched the catamaran, and went on till they came to the point where there was a wall of stones rudely put together to shield the land from the full shock of the waves, when the west wind rolled them heavily from the Indian Ocean and the Golden Sea. Putting the plank down again, Mark went forward with his harpoon, for he knew that shoals of fish often played in the water when it was still, just beneath this rocky wall. As he expected, they

were there this morning, for the most part roach, but a few perch. He knelt and crept out on all fours to the edge of the wall, leaving his hat on the sward. Looking over, he could see to the stony bottom, and as there was not a ripple, he could see distinctly.

He put his harpoon gently, without a splash, into the sunlit water, and let it sink slowly in among the shoal. The roach swam aside a yard or so from it, but showed no more fear than that it should not touch them. Mark kept his harpoon still till a larger roach came slowly by within eighteen inches of the point, when he jerked it at the fish. It passed six inches behind his tail, and though Mark tried again and again, thrusting quickly, he could not strike them with his single point. To throw it like a dart he knew was useless, they were too deep down, nor could he hit so small an object in motion. He could not do it, but some days afterwards he struck a small tench in the brook, and got him out. The tench was still, so that he could put the head of his harpoon almost on it.

They marched on, and presently launched the catamaran. It would only support one at a time astride and half in the water, but it was a capital thing. Sitting on it, Bevis paddled along the

shore nearly to the rocky wall and back, but he did not forget his promise, and was not out of his depth; he could see the stones at the bottom all the time. Mark tried to stand on the plank, but one edge would go down and pitch him off. He next tried to lie on it on his back, and succeeded so long as he let his legs dangle over each side, and so balanced it. Then they stood away, and swam to it as if it had been the last plank of a wreck.

“Look!” said Mark, after they had done this several times. He was holding the plank at arm’s length with his limbs floating. “Look!”

“I see. What is it?”

“This is the way. We ought to have held the jumping-pole like this. This is the way to hold an oar and swim.”

“So it is,” said Bevis, “of course, that’s it; we’ll have the punt, and try with a scull.”

Held at arm’s length, almost anything will keep a swimmer afloat; but if he puts it under his arm or chest, it takes a good-sized spar. Splashing about, presently the plank forgotten for the moment slipped away, and, impelled by the waves they made, floated into deep water.

“I’m sure I could swim to it,” said Bevis, and he was inclined to try.

“We promised not,” said Mark.

“You stupe—I know that; but if there’s a plank, that’s not dangerous then.” “Stupe” was their word for stupid. He waded out till the water was over his shoulders, and tried to lift him.

“Don’t—don’t,” said Mark. Bevis began to lean his chest on the water.

“If you’re captain,” cried Mark, “you ought not to.”

“No more I ought,” said Bevis, coming back. “Get my bow.”

“What for?”

“Go and get my bow.”

“I shan’t, if you say it like that.”

“You shall. Am I not captain?”

Mark was caught by his own argument, and went out on the sward for the bow.

“Tie the arrow on with the string,” shouted Bevis. Mark did it, and brought it in, keeping it above the surface. Bevis climbed on the railings, half out of water, so that he could steady himself with his knees against the rail.

“Now, give me the bow,” he said. He took good aim, and the nail, filed to a sharp point, was driven deep into the soft deal of the plank. With the string he hauled the catamaran gently back, but it

would not come straight ; it slipped sideways (like the boomerang in the air), and came ashore under the aspen bough.

When they came out they bathed again in the air and the sunshine ; they rolled on the sward, and ran. Bevis, as he ran and shouted, shot off an arrow with all his might to see how far it would go. It went up, up, and curving over, struck a bough at the top of one of the elms, and stopped there by the rooks' nests. Mark shouted and danced on the bird's-foot lotus, and darted his spear, heedless of the bone-head. It went up into the hazel boughs of the hedge among the young nuts, and he could not get it till dressed, for the thistles.

They ran again and chased each other in and out the sycamore trunks, and visited the hollow, shouting their loudest, till the distant herd looked up from their grazing. The sun-light poured upon them, and the light air came along ; they bathed in air and sunbeam, and gathered years of health like flowers from the field.

After they had dressed they took the catamaran to the quarry to leave it there (somewhat out of sight lest any one should take it for firewood), so as to save the labour of carrying it to and fro. There was a savage of another tribe in the quarry, and

they crept on all fours, taking great pains that he should not see them. It was the old man who was supposed to look after the boats, and generally to watch the water. Had they not been so occupied they would have heard the thump, thump of the sculls as he rowed, or rather moved the punt up to where the narrow mound separated the New Sea from the quarry.

He was at work scooping out some sand, and filling sacks with the best, with which cargo he would presently voyage home, and retail it to the dairymaids and at the roadside inns to eke out that spirit of juniper-berries needful to those who have dwelt long by marshy places. They need not have troubled to conceal themselves from this stranger savage; he would not have seen them if they had stood close by him. A narrow life narrows the sweep of the eye. Miserable being, he could see no farther than one of the mussels of the lake which travel in a groove. His groove led to the sanded inn-kitchen, and his shell was shut to all else. But they crept like skirmishers, dragging the catamaran laboriously behind them, using every undulation of the ground to hide themselves, till they had got it into the hollow, where they left it beside a heap of stones. Then they had to crawl out again, and for

thirty yards along the turf, till they could stand up unseen.

“Let’s get the poison,” said Mark, as they were going home.

So they searched for the poison-plants. The woody nightshade they knew very well, having been warned long ago against the berries. It was now only in flower, and it would be some time before there were any berries; but after thinking it over they decided to gather a bundle of stalks, and soak them for the deadly juice. There were stems of arum in the ditches, tipped with green berries. These they thought would do, but shrank from touching. The green looked unpleasant and slimy.

Next they hunted for mandragora, of which John Young had given them an account. It grew in waste places, and by the tombs in the churchyard, and shrieked while you pulled it up. This they could not find. Mark said perhaps it wanted an enchanter to discover it, but he gathered a quantity of the dark green milfoil from the grass beside the hedge and paths, and crammed his pockets with it. Some of the lads had told him that it was a deadly poison. It is the reverse—thus reputation varies—for it was used to cure mediæval sword-cuts. They passed the water-parsnip, unaware of its pernicious qualities, looking for noisome hemlock.

“There’s another kind of nightshade,” said Bevis; “because I read about it in that old book indoors, and it’s much stronger than this. We must have some of it.”

They looked a long time, but could not find it; and, full of their direful object, did not heed sounds of laughter on the other side of the hedge they were searching, till they got through a gap and jumped into the midst of a group of haymakers resting for lunch. The old men had got a little way apart by themselves, for they wanted to eat like Pan. All the women were together in a “gaggle,” a semicircle of them sitting round a young girl who lounged on a heap of mown grass, with a huge labourer lying full length at her feet. She had a piece of honey suckle in her hand, and he had a black wooden “bottle” near him.

There was a courting going on between these two, and all the other women, married and single, collected round them, to aid in the business with jokes and innuendoes.

Bevis and Mark instantly recognized in the girl the one who at “Calais” had shown them the road home, and in the man at her feet the fellow who was asleep on the flint heap.

Her large eyes, like black cherries—for black

eyes and black cherries have a faint tint of red behind them—were immediately bent full on Bevis as she rose and curtsied to him. Her dress at the throat had come unhooked, and showed the line to which the sun had browned her, and where the sweet clear whiteness of the untouched skin began. The soft roundness of the swelling plum as it ripens filled her common print, torn by briars, with graceful contours. In the shadow of the oak her large black eyes shone larger, loving and untaught.

Bevis did not speak. He and Mark were a little taken aback, having jumped through the gap so suddenly from savagery into haymaking. They hastened through a gateway into another field.

“How you do keep a-staring arter they!” said the huge young labourer to the girl. “Yen you seen he afore? It’s onely our young measter.”

“I knows,” said the girl, sitting down as Bevis and Mark disappeared through the gateway. “He put a bough on you to keep the flies off while you were sleeping.”

“Did a’? Then why didn’t you ax ’un for a quart?”

She had slipped along the fields by the road that day, and had seen Bevis put the bough over her lover’s face as he slept on the flint-heap—where she left

him. The grateful labourer's immediate idea was to ask Bevis for some beer.

Behind the hedge Bevis and Mark continued their search for deadly poison. They took some "gix," but were not certain that it was the true hemlock.

"There's a sort of sorrel that's poison," said Mark.

"And heaps of roots," said Bevis.

They were now near home, and went in to extract the essence from the plants they had. The nightshade yielded very little juice from its woody vines, or stalks; the "gix" not much more: the milfoil, well bruised and squeezed, gave most. They found three small phials, the nightshade and "gix" only filled a quarter of the phials used for them: Mark had a phial three-parts full of milfoil. These they arranged in a row on the bench in the bench-room under the crossbow and boomerang, for future use in war. They did not dip their arrows or harpoon in yet, lest they should poison any fish or animal they might kill, and so render it unfit for food.

CHAPTER XII.

SAVAGES CONTINUED—MAKING THE SAILS.

THE same evening, having got a great plateful of cherries, they went to work in the bench-room to cut out the sails from the parcel of canvas. There had been cherries in town weeks before, but these were the first considered ripe in the country, which is generally later. With a cherry in his mouth, Bevis spread the canvas out upon the floor, and marked it with his pencil. The rig was to be fore and aft, a mainsail and jib; the mast and gaff, or as they called it, the yard, were already finished. It took forty cherries to get it cut out properly, then they threw the other pieces aside, and placed the sails on the floor in the position they would be when fixed.

“You are sure they’re not too big,” said Mark, “if a white squall comes.”

“There are no white squalls now,” said Bevis on

his knees, thoughtfully sucking a cherry-stone. "It's cyclones now. The sails are just the right size, and of course we can take in a reef. You cut off—let me see—twenty bits of string, a foot—no, fifteen inches long: it's for the reefs."

Mark began to measure off the string from a quantity of the largest make, which they had bought for the purpose.

"There's the block," he said. "How are you going to manage about the pulley to haul up the mainsail?"

"The block's a bore," mused Bevis, rolling his cherry-stone about. "I don't think we could make one—"

"Buy one."

"Pooh! There's nothing in Latten; why you can't buy anything." Mark was silent, he knew it was true. "If we make a slit in the mast and put a little wheel in off a window-blind or something—"

"That would do first-rate."

"No it wouldn't; it would weaken the mast, stupe, and the first cyclone would snap it."

"So it would. Then we should drift ashore and get eaten."

"Most likely."

“Well, bore a hole and put the cord through that; that would not weaken it much.”

“No; but I know! A curtain-ring! Don’t you see, you fasten the curtain-ring, it’s brass, to the mast, and put the rope through, and it runs easy—brass is smooth.”

“Of course. Who’s that?”

Some small stones came rattling in at the open window, and two voices shouted,—

“I say. Holloa!”

Bevis and Mark went to the window and saw two of their friends, Bill and Wat, on the garden path below.

“When’s the war going to begin?” asked Wat.

“Tell us about the war,” said Bill.

“The war’s not ready,” said Bevis.

“Well how long is it going to be?”

“Make haste.”

“Everybody’s ready.”

“Lots of them. Do you think you shall want any more?”

“I know six,” said a third voice, and Tim came round the corner, having waited to steal a strawberry, “and one’s a whopper.”

“Let’s begin.”

“Now then.”

“O! don’t make such a noise,” said Bevis. The sails and the savages had rather put the war aside, but Mark had talked of it to others, and the idea spread in a minute; everybody jumped at it, and all the cry was War!

“Make me lieutenant,” said Andrew, appearing from the orchard.

“I want to carry the flag.”

“Come down and tell us.”

“How are we to tell you if you keep talking?” said Mark; Bevis put his head out of window by the pears, and they were quiet.

“I tell you the war’s not ready,” he said; “and you’re as bad as rebels—I mean you’re a mutiny to come here before you’re sent for, and you ought to be shot”—(“Executed,” whispered Mark behind him)—“executed, of course.”

“How are we to know when it’s ready?”

“You’ll be summoned,” said Bevis. “There will be a muster-roll and a trumpet blown, and you’ll have to march a thousand miles.”

“All right.”

“And the swords have to be made, and the eagles, besides the map of the roads and the grub”—(“Provisions,” said Mark)—“provisions, of course, and all the rest, and how do you think a war is to be got

ready in a minute, you stupes ! ” in a tone of great indignation.

They grumbled: they wanted a big battle on the spot.

“ If you bother me much,” said Bevis, “ while I’m getting the fleet ready, there shan’t be a war at all.”

“ Are you getting a fleet ? ”

“ Here are the sails,” said Mark, holding up some canvas.

“ Well, you won’t be long ? ”

“ You’ll let us know ? ”

“ Shall we tell anybody else ? ”

“ Lots,” said Bevis ; “ tell lots. We’re going to have the biggest armies ever seen.”

“ Thousands,” said Mark. “ Millions ! ”

“ Millions ! ” said Bevis.

“ Hurrah ! ” they shouted.

“ Here,” said Bevis, throwing the remainder of the cherries out like a shower among them.

“ Are you coming to quoits ? ”

“ O ! no,” said Mark, “ we have so much to do ; now go away.” The soldiery moved off through the garden, snatching lawlessly at any fruit they saw.

“ Mark,” said Bevis on his knees again, “ these sails will have to be hemmed, you know.”

“ So they will.”

“We can’t do it. You must take them home to Frances, and make her stitch them; roll them up and go directly.”

“I don’t want to go home,” said Mark. “And perhaps she won’t stitch them.”

“I’m sure she will; she will do anything for me.”

“So she will,” said Mark rather sullenly. “Everybody does everything for you.”

Bevis had rolled up the sails, quite indifferent as to what people did for him, and put them into Mark’s unwilling hands.

“Now you can have the donkey, and mind and come back before breakfast.”

“I can’t catch him,” said Mark.

“No; no more can I—stop. John Young’s sure to be in the stable, he can.”

“Ah,” said Mark, brightening up a little, “that moke is a beast.”

John Young, having stipulated for a “pot,” went to catch the donkey; they sat down in the shed to wait for him, but as he did not come for some time they went after him. They met him in the next field leading the donkey with a halter, and red as fire from running. They took the halter and sent John away for the “pot.” There was a wicked thought in their hearts, and they wanted witnesses

away. So soon as John had gone, Mark looked at Bevis, and Bevis looked at Mark. Mark growled, Bevis stamped his feet.

“Beast!” said Mark.

“Wretch!” said Bevis.

“You—you—you, Thing,” said Mark; they ground their teeth, and glared at the animal. They led him all fearful to a tree, a little tree but stout enough; it was an ash, and it grew somewhat away from the hedge. They tied him firmly to the tree, and then they scourged this miserable citizen.

All the times they had run in vain to catch him; all the times they had had to walk when they might have ridden one behind the other on his back; all his refusals to be tempted; all the wrongs they had endured at his heels boiled in their breasts. They broke their sticks upon his back, they cut new ones, and smashed them too, they hurled the fragments at him, and then got some more. They thrashed, thwacked, banged, thumped, poked, prodded, kicked, belaboured, bumped, and hit him, working themselves into a frenzy of rage.

Mark fetched a pole to knock him the harder as it was heavy; Bevis crushed into the hedge, and brought out a dead log to hurl at him, a log he could but just lift and swung to throw with difficulty,—the

same Bevis who put an aspen leaf carefully under the fly to save it from drowning. The sky was blue, and the evening beautiful, but no one came to help the donkey.

When they were tired, they sat down and rested, and after they were cooler and had recovered from the fatigue, they loosed him—quite cowed this time and docile, and Mark, with the parcel of sails, got on his back. After all this onslaught there did not seem any difference in him except that his coat had been well dusted. This immunity aggravated them; they could not hurt him.

“Put him in the stable all night,” said Bevis, “and don’t give him anything to eat.”

“And no water,” said Mark, as he rode off. “So I will.”

And so he did. But the donkey had cropped all day, and was full, and just before John Young caught him had had a draught, rather unusual for him and equal to an omen, at the drinking-place by the raft. The donkey slept, and beat them.

After Mark had gone Bevis returned to the bench-room, and fastened a brass curtain-ring to the mast, which they had carried up there. When he had finished, noticing the three phials of poison he thought he would go and see if he could find out any

more fatal plants. There was an ancient encyclopædia in the bookcase, in which he had read many curious things, such as would not be considered practical enough for modern publication, which must be dry or nothing. Among the rest was a page of chemical signs and those used by the alchemists, some of which he had copied off for magic. Pulling out the volumes, which were piled haphazard, like bricks shot out of a cart, there was one that had all the alphabets employed in the different languages, Coptic, Gothic, Ethiopic, Syriac, and so on.

The Arabic took his fancy as the most mysterious—the sweeping curves, the quivering lines, the blots where the reed pen thickened, there was no knowing what such writing might not mean. How mystic the lettering which forms the running ornament of the Alhambra! It is the writing of the Orient, of the alchemist and enchanter, the astrologer and the prophet.

Bevis copied the alphabet, and then he made a roll of a broad sheet of yellowish paper torn from the end of one of the large volumes, a fly-leaf, and wrote the letters upon it in such a manner as their shape and flowing contour arranged themselves. With these he mingled the alchemic signs for fire and air

and water, and so by the time the dusk crept into the parlour and filled it with shadow he had completed a manuscript. This he rolled up and tied with string, intending to bury it in the sand of the quarry, so that when they sailed round in the ship they might land and discover it.

Mark returned to breakfast, and said that Frances had promised to hem the sails, and thought it would not take long. Bevis showed him the roll.

“It looks magic,” said Mark. “What does it mean?”

“I don’t know,” said Bevis. “That is what we shall have to find out when we discover it. Besides the magic is never in the writing; it is what you see when you read it—it’s like looking in a looking-glass, and seeing people moving about a thousand miles away.”

“I know,” said Mark. “We can put it in a sand-martin’s hole, then it won’t get wet if it rains.”

They started for the bathing-place, and carefully deposited the roll in a sand-martin’s hole some way up the face of the quarry, covering it with sand. To know the spot again, they counted and found it was the third burrow to the right, if you stood by the stone heap and looked straight towards the first

sycamore-tree. Having taken the bearings, they dragged the catamaran down to the water, and had a swim. When they came out, and were running about on the high ground by the sycamores, they caught sight of a dog-cart slowly crossing the field a long way off, and immediately hid behind a tree to reconnoitre the new savage, themselves unseen.

"It's Jack," said Bevis; "I'm sure it is." It was Jack, and he was going at a walking pace, because the track across the field was rough, and he did not care to get to the gateway before the man sent to open it had arrived there. His object was to look at some grass to rent for his sheep.

"Yes, it's Jack," said Mark, very slowly and doubtfully. Bevis looked at him.

"Well, suppose it is; he won't hurt us. We can easily shoot him if he comes here."

"But the letter," said Mark.

"What letter?"

Mark had started for his clothes, which were in a heap on the sward, he seized his coat, and drew a note much frayed from one of the pockets. He looked at it, heaved a deep sigh, and ran with all his might to intercept Jack. Bevis watched him tearing across the field and laughed; then he sat down on the grass to wait for him.

Mark, out of breath and with thistles in his feet, would never have overtaken the dog-cart had not Jack seen him coming and stopped. He could not speak, but handed up the note in silence, more like Cupid than messengers generally. He panted so that he could not run away directly, as he had intended.

“You rascal,” said Jack, flicking at him with his whip. “How long have you had this in your pocket?”

Mark tried to run away, he could only trot; Jack turned his mare’s head, as if half-inclined to drive after him.

“If you come,” said Mark, shaking his fist, “we’ll shoot you and stick a spear into you. Aha! you’re afraid! aha!”

Jack was too eager to read his note to take vengeance. Mark walked away jeering at him. The reins hung down, and the mare cropped as the master read. Mark laughed to think he had got off so easily, for the letter had been in his pocket a week, though he had faithfully promised to deliver it the same day—for a shilling. Had he not been sent home with the sails it might have remained another week till the envelope was fretted through.

Frances asked if he had given it to Jack.

Mark started. "Ah," said she, "you have forgotten it."

"Of course I have," said Mark. "It's so long ago."

"Then you did really?"

"How stupid you are," said Mark; and Frances could not press him further, lest she should seem too anxious about Jack. So the young dog escaped, but he did not dare delay longer, and had not Jack happened to cross the field meant to have ridden up to his house on the donkey. When Jack had read the note he looked at the retreating figure of Cupid and opened his lips, but caught his breath as it were and did not say it. He put his whip aside as he drove on, lest he should unjustly punish the mare.

Mark strolled leisurely back to the bathing-place, but when he got there Bevis was not to be seen. He looked round at the water, the quarry, the sycamore-trees. He ran down to the water's edge with his heart beating and a wild terror causing a whirling sensation in his eyes, for the thought in the instant came to him that Bevis had gone out of his depth. He tried to shout "Bevis!" but he was choked; he raised his hands; as he looked across the water he suddenly saw something white moving among the fir-trees at the head of the gulf.

He knew it was Bevis, but he was so overcome he

sat down on the sward to watch, he could not stand up. The something white was stealthily passing from tree to tree like an Indian. Mark looked round, and saw his own harpoon on the grass, but at once missed the bow and arrows. His terror had suspended his observation, else he would have noticed this before.

Bevis, when Mark ran with the letter to Jack, had sat down on the sward to wait for him, and by-and-by, while still, and looking out over the water, his quiet eye became conscious of a slight movement opposite at the mouth of the Nile. There was a ripple, and from the high ground where he sat he could see the reflection of the trees in the water there undulate, though their own boughs shut off the light air from the surface. He got up, took his bow and arrows, and went into the firs. The dead dry needles or leaves on the ground felt rough to his naked feet, and he had to take care not to step on the hard cones. A few small bramble bushes forced him to go aside, so that it took him some little time to get near the Nile.

Then he had to always keep a tree trunk in front of him, and to step slowly that his head might not be seen before he could see what it was himself. He stooped as the ripples on the other side of the

brook became visible; then gradually lifting his head, sheltered by a large alder, he traced the ripples back to the shore under the bank, and saw a moor-cock feeding by the roots of a willow. Bevis waited till the cock turned his back, then he stole another step forward to the alder.

It was about ten yards to the willow which hung over the water, but he could not get any nearer, for there was no more cover beyond the alder—the true savage is never content unless he is close to his game. Bevis grasped his bow firm in his left hand, drew the arrow quick but steadily—not with a jerk—and as the sharp point covered the bird, loosed it. There was a splash and a fluttering, he knew instantly that he had hit. “Mark! Mark!” he shouted, and ran down the bank, heedless of the jagged stones. Mark heard, and came racing through the firs.

The arrow had struck the moor-cock’s wing, but even then the bird would have got away, for the point had no barb, and in diving and struggling it would have come out, had not he been so near the willow. The spike went through his wing and nailed it to a thick root; the arrow quivered as it was stopped by the wood. Bevis seized him by the neck and drew the arrow out.

“Kill him! Kill him!” shouted Mark. The other savage pulled the neck, and Mark, leaping down the jagged stones, took the dead bird in his eager hands.

“Here’s where the arrow went in.”

“There’s three feathers in the water.”

“Feel how warm he is.”

“Look at the thick red on his bill.”

“See his claws.”

“Hurrah!”

“Let’s eat him.”

“Raw?”

“No. Cook him.”

“All right. Make a fire.”

Thus the savages gloated over their prey. They went back up the bank and through the firs to the sward.

“Where shall we make the fire?” said Mark.

“In the quarry?”

“That old stupe may come for sand.”

“So he may. Let’s make it here.”

“Everybody would see.”

“By the hedge towards the elms then.”

“No. I know, in the hollow.”

“Of course, nobody would come there.”

“Pick up some sticks.”

“Come and help me.”

“I shall dress—there are brambles.”

So they dressed, and then found that Mark had broken a nail, and Bevis had cut his foot with the sharp edge of a fossil shell projecting from one of the stones. But that was nothing, they could think of nothing but the bird. While they were gathering armsful of dead sticks from among the trees, they remembered that John Young, who always paunched the rabbits and hares and got everything ready for the kitchen, said coots and moorhens must be skinned, they could not be plucked because of the “dowl.”

Dowl is the fluff, the tiny featherets no fingers can remove. So after they had carried the wood they had collected to the round hollow in the field beyond the sycamore-trees, they took out their knives, and haggled the skin off. They built their fire very skilfully; they had made so many in the Peninsula (for there is nothing so pleasant as making a fire out of doors), that they had learnt exactly how to do it. Two short sticks were stuck in the ground and a third across to them, like a triangle. Against this frame a number of the smallest and driest sticks were leaned, so that they made a tiny hut. Outside these there was a second layer of longer

sticks; all standing, or rather leaning against the first.

If a stick is placed across, lying horizontally, supposing it catches fire, it just burns through the middle and that is all, the ends go out. If it is stood nearly upright, the flame draws up it; it is certain to catch; it burns longer and leaves a good ember. They arranged the rest of their bundles ready to be thrown on when wanted, and then put some paper, a handful of dry grass, and a quantity of the least and driest twigs, like those used in birds'-nests, inside the little hut. Then having completed the pile they remembered they had no matches.

"It's very lucky," said Bevis. "If we had we should have to throw them away. Matches are not proper."

"Two pieces of wood," said Mark. "I know; you rub them together till they catch fire, and one piece must be hard and the other soft."

"Yes," said Bevis, and taking out his knife he cut off the end of one of the larger dead branches they had collected, and made a smooth side to it. Mark had some difficulty in finding a soft piece to rub on it, for those which touched soft crumbled when rubbed on the hard surface Bevis had prepared.

A bit of willow seemed best, and Bevis seizing it first, rubbed it to and fro till his arm ached and his face glowed. Mark, lying on the grass, watched to see the slight tongue of flame shoot up, but it did not come.

Bevis stopped, tired, and putting his hand on the smooth surface found it quite warm, so that they had no doubt they could do it in time. Mark tried next, and then Bevis again, and Mark followed him ; but though the wood became warm it would not burst into flame, as it ought to have done.

CHAPTER XIII.

SAVAGES CONTINUED—THE MAST FITTED.

“THIS is very stupid,” said Bevis, throwing himself back at full length on the grass, and crossing his arms over his face to shield his eyes from the sun.

“They ought not to tell us such stupid things,” said Mark. “We might rub all day.”

“I know,” said Bevis, sitting up again. “It’s a drill; it’s done with a drill. Give me my bow—there, don’t you know how Jonas made the hole in Tom’s gun?”

Jonas the blacksmith, a clever fellow in his way, drilled out a broken nipple in the bird-keeper’s muzzle-loading gun, working the drill with a bow. Bevis and Mark, always on the watch everywhere, saw him do it.

They cut a notch or hole in the hard surface of the thicker bough, and shaped another piece of wood

to a dull point to fit in it. Bevis took this, placed it against the string of his bow, and twisted the string round it. Then he put the point of the stick in the hole ; Mark held the bough firm on the ground, but immediately he began to work the bow backwards and forwards, rotating the drill alternate ways, he found that the other end against which he pressed with his chest would quickly fray a hole in his jacket. They had to stop and cut another piece of wood with a hole to take the top of the drill, and Bevis now pressed on this with his left hand (finding that it did not need the weight of his chest), and worked the bow with his right.

The drill revolved swiftly, it was really very near the savages' fire-drill ; but the expected flame did not come. The wood was not dry enough, or the point of friction was not accurately adjusted ; the wood became quite hot, but did not ignite. You may have the exact machinery and yet not be able to use it, the possession of the tools does not make the smith. There is an indefinite something in the touch of the master's hand which is wanting.

Bevis flung down the bow without a word, heaving a deep sigh of rage.

"Flint and steel," said Mark presently.

"Hum !"

“There’s a flint in the gateway,” continued Mark. “I saw it just now; and you can knock it against the end of your knife—”

“You stupe; there’s no tinder.”

“No more there is.”

“I hate it—it’s horrid,” said Bevis. “What’s the use of trying to do things when everything can’t be done?”

He sat on his heels as he knelt, and looked round scowling. There was the water—no fire to be obtained from thence; there was the broad field—no fire there; there was the sun overhead.

“Go home directly, and get a burning-glass—unscrew the telescope.”

“Is it proper?” said Mark, not much liking the journey.

“It’s not matches,” said Bevis sententiously.

Mark knew it was of no use, he had to go, and he went, taking off his jacket before he started, as he meant to run a good part of the way. It was not really far, but as his mind was at the hollow all the while the time seemed twice as long. After he had gone Bevis soon found that the sunshine was too warm to sit in, though while they had been so busy and working their hardest they had never noticed it. Directly the current of occupation was interrupted

the sun became unbearable. Bevis went to the shadow of the sycamores, taking the skinned bird with him, lest a wandering beast of prey—some weasel or jackal—should pounce on it.

He thought Mark was a very long time gone ; he got up and walked round the huge trunk of the sycamore, and looked up into it to see if any immense boa-constrictor was coiled among its great limbs. He thought they would some day build a hut up there on a platform of poles. Far out over the water he saw the Unknown Island, and remembered that when they sailed there in the ship there was no knowing what monsters or what enchantments they might encounter. So he walked out from the trees into the field to look for some moly to take with them, and resist Circe.

The bird's-foot lotus he knew was not it. There was one blue spot of veronica still, and another tiny blue flower which he did not know, besides the white honeysuckle clover at which the grey bees were busy, and would scarce stir from under his footsteps. He found three button mushrooms, and put them in his pocket. Wandering on among the buttercup stalks and bunches of grass, like a butterfly drawn hither and thither by every speck of colour, he came to a little white flower on

a slender stem a few inches high, which he gathered for moly. Putting the precious flower—good against sorcery—in his breast-pocket for safety, he rose from his knees, and saw Mark coming by the sycamores.

Mark was hot and tired with running, yet he had snatched time enough to bring four cherries for Bevis. He had the burning-glass—a lens unscrewed from the telescope, and sitting on the grass they focussed the sun's rays on a piece of paper. The lens was powerful and the summer sun bright, so that in a few seconds there was a tiny black speck, then the faintest whiff of bluish smoke, then a leap of flame, and soon another, till the paper burned, and their fire was lit. As the little hut blazed up they put some more boughs on, and the dead leaves attached to them sent up a thin column of smoke.

“The savages will see that,” said Mark, “and come swarming down from the hills.”

“We ought to have made the fire in a hole,” said Bevis, “and put turf on it.”

“What ever shall we do?” said Mark. “They'll be here in a minute.”

“Fetich,” said Bevis. “I know, cut that stick sharp at the end, tie a handful of grass on it—be quick—and run down towards the elms and stick

it up. Then they'll think we're doing fetich, and won't come any nearer."

"First-rate," said Mark, and off he went with the stick, and thrust it into the sward with a wisp of grass tied to the top. Bevis piled on the branches, and when he came back there was a large fire. Then the difficulty was how to cook the bird? If they put it on the ashes, it would burn and be spoiled; if they hung it up, they could not make it twist round and round, and they had no iron pot to boil it; or earthenware pot to drop red-hot stones in, and so heat the water without destroying the vessel. The only thing they could do was to stick it on a stick, and hold it to the fire till it was roasted, one side at a time.

"The harpoon will do," said Bevis. "Spit him on it."

"No," said Mark; "the bone will burn and get spoiled—spit him on your arrow."

"The nail will burn out and spoil my arrow, and I've lost one in the elms. Go and cut a long stick."

"You ought to go and do it," said Mark; "I've done everything this morning."

"So you have; I'll go," said Bevis and away; he went to the nut-tree hedge. He soon brought back

a straight hazel-rod to which he cut a point, the bird was spitted, and they held it by turns at the fire, sitting on the sward.

It was very warm in the round, bowl-like hollow, the fire at the bottom and the sun overhead, but they were too busy to heed it. Mark crept on hands and knees up the side of the hollow while Bevis was cooking, and cautiously peered over the edge to see if any savages were near. There were none in sight; the fetich kept them at a distance.

"We must remember to take the burning-glass with us when we go on our voyage," said Bevis.

"Perhaps the sun won't shine."

"No. Mind you tell me, we will take some matches, too; and if the sun shines use the glass, and if he doesn't, strike a match."

"We shall want a camp-fire when we go to war," said Mark.

"Of course we shall."

"Everybody keeps on about the war," said Mark. "They're always at me."

"I found these buttons," said Bevis; "I had forgotten them."

He put the little mushrooms, stems upwards, on some embers which had fallen apart from the main fire.

The branches as they burned became white directly, coated over with a film of ash, so that except just in the centre they did not look red, though glowing with heat under the white layer. Even the flames were but just visible in the brilliant sunshine, and were paler in colour than those of the hearth. Now and then the thin column of grey smoke, rising straight up out of the hollow, was puffed aside at its summit by the light air wandering over the field. As the butterflies came over the edge of the hollow into the heated atmosphere, they fluttered up high to escape it.

"I'm sure it's done," said Mark, drawing the stick away from the fire. The bird was brown and burnt in one place, so they determined to eat it and not spoil it by over-roasting. When Bevis began to carve it with his pocket-knife he found one leg quite raw, the wings were burnt, but there was a part of the breast and the other leg fairly well cooked. These they ate, little pieces at a time, slowly, and in silence, for it was proper to like it. But they did not pick the bones clean.

"No salt," said Mark, putting down the piece he had in his hand.

"No bread," said Bevis, flinging the leg away.

"We don't do it right somehow," said Mark.

“It takes such a long time to learn to be savages.”

“Years,” said Bevis, picking a mushroom from the embers, it burned his fingers and he had to wait till it was cooler. The mushrooms were better, their cups held some of the juice as they cooked, retaining the sweet flavour. They were so small, they were but a bite each.

“I am thirsty,” said Mark. Bevis was the same, so they went down towards the water. Mark began to run down the slope, when Bevis suddenly remembered.

“Stop,” he cried; “you can’t drink there.”

“Why not?”

“Why of course it’s the New Sea. We must go round to the Nile; it’s fresh water there.”

So they ran through the firs to the Nile, and lapped from the brook. On the way home a little boy stepped out from the trees on the bank where it was high, and he could look down at them.

“I say!”—he had been waiting for them—“say!”

“Well!” growled Mark.

“Bevis,” said the boy. Bevis looked up, he could not demean himself to answer such a mite.

The boy looked round to see that he was sure of his retreat through the trees to the gap in the hedge he could crawl through, but they would find it difficult. Besides, they would have to run up the bank, which was thick with brambles. He got his courage together and shouted in his shrill little voice,—

“I say, Ted says he shan’t play if you don’t have war soon.”

Mark picked up a dead branch and hurled it at the mite; the mite dodged it, and it broke against a tree, then he ran for his life, but they did not follow. Bevis said nothing till they reached the blue summer-house at home and sat down. Then he yawned.

“War is a bother,” he said, putting his hands in his pockets, and leaning back in an attitude of weary despair at having to do something. If the rest would not have played, he would have egged them on with furious energy till they did. As they were eager he did not care.

“O! well!” said Mark, nodding his head up and down as he spoke, as much as to indicate that he did not care personally; but still, “O! well! all I know is, if you don’t go to war Ted will have one all to himself, and have a battle with somebody

else. I believe he sent Charlie.” Charlie was the mite.

“Did he say he would have a war all to himself?” said Bevis, sitting upright.

“I don’t know,” said Mark, nodding his head. “They say lots of things.”

“What do they say?”

“O! heaps; perhaps you don’t know how to make war, and perhaps—”

“I’ll have the biggest war,” said Bevis, getting up, “that was ever known, and Ted’s quite stupid. Mind, he doesn’t have any more cherries, that’s certain. I hate him—awfully! Let’s make the swords.”

“All right,” said Mark, jumping up, delighted that the war was going to begin. He was as eager as the others, only he did not dare say so. Most of the afternoon they were cutting sticks for swords, and measuring them so as to have all the same length.

Next morning the governor went with them to bathe, as he wanted to see how they were getting on with their swimming. They had the punt, and the governor stopped it about twenty yards from the shore, to which they had to swim. Bevis dived first, and with some blowing and spluttering and

splashing managed to get to where he could bottom with his feet. He could have gone further than that, but it was a new feeling to know that he was out of his depth, and it made him swim too fast and splash. Mark having seen that Bevis could do it, and knowing he could swim as far as Bevis could, did it much better.

The governor was satisfied and said they could now have the blue boat, but on two conditions, first, that they still kept their promise not to go out of their depth, and secondly, that they were to try and see every day how far they could swim along the shore. He guessed they had rather neglected their swimming; having learnt the art itself they had not tried to improve themselves. He said he should come with them once or twice a week, and see them dive from the punt so as to get used to deep water.

If they would practise along the shore in their depth till they could swim from the rocky point to the rails, about seventy yards, he would give them each a present, and they could then go out of their depth. He was obliged to be careful about the depth till they could swim a good way, because he could not be always with them, and fresh water is not so buoyant as the sea, so that young swimmers soon tire.

The same day they carried the mast up, and fitted it in the hole in the thwart. The mast was a little too large, but that was soon remedied. The bowsprit was lashed to the ring to which the painter was fastened, and at its inner end to the seat and mast. Next the gaff was tried, and drew up and down fairly well through the curtain-ring. But one thing they had overlooked—the sheets, or ropes for the jib, must work through something, and they had not provided any staples. Besides this, there was the rudder to be fitted with a tiller instead of the ropes. Somehow they did not like ropes; it did not look like a ship. This instinct was right, for ropes are not of much use when sailing; you have no power on the rudder as with a tiller.

After fitting the mast and bowsprit they unshipped them, and carried them home for safety till the sails were ready. Bevis wanted Mark to go and ask Frances to be quick, but Mark was afraid to return just yet, as Frances would now know from Jack that he had forgotten the letter. Every now and then bundles of sticks for swords, and longer ones for spears and darts, and rods for arrows, were brought in by the soldiery. All these were taken upstairs into the bench-room, or armoury, because they did not like their things looked at or touched,

and there was a lock and key to that room. Bevis always kept the key in his pocket now.

They could not fit a head to the oyster barrel for the fresh water on the voyage, but found a large round tin canister with a tight lid, such as contain cornflour, and which would go inside the oyster barrel. The tin canister would hold water, and could be put in the barrel, so as to look proper. More sticks kept coming, and knobbed clubs, till the armoury was crowded with the shafts of weapons. Now that Bevis had consented to go to war, all the rest were eager to serve him, so that he easily got a messenger to take a note (as Mark was afraid to go) to Frances to be quick with the stitching.

In the evening Bevis tore another broad folio page or fly-leaf from one of the big books in the parlour, and took it out into the summer-house, where they kept an old chair—the back gone—which did very well for a table. Cutting his pencil, Bevis took his hat off and threw it on the seat which ran round inside; then kneeling down, as the table was so low, he proceeded to draw his map of the coming campaign.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE COUNCIL OF WAR.

“ I say ! ”

“ Battleaxes—”

“ St. George is right—”

“ Hold your tongue.”

“ Pikes twenty feet long.”

“ Marching two and two.”

“ Do stop.”

“ I shall be general.”

“ That you won’t.”

“ Romans had shields.”

“ Battleaxes are best.”

“ Knobs with spikes.”

“ I say—I say ! ”

“ You’re a donkey ! ”

“ They had flags—”

“ And drums.”

“ I’ve got a flute.”

“I—”

“You!”

“Yes, *me*.”

“Hi!” “Tom.” “If you hit me, Ill hit you.”
“Now.” “Don’t.” “Be quiet.” “Go on.”
“Let’s begin.” “I will”—buzz—buzz—buzz!

Phil, Tom, Ted, Jim, Frank, Walter, Bill, “Charl,” Val, Bob, Cecil, Sam, Fred, George, Harry, Michael, Jack, Andrew, Luke, and half a dozen more were talking all together, shouting across each other, occasionally fighting, wrestling, and rolling over on the sward under an oak. There were two up in the tree, bellowing their views from above, and little Charlie (“Charl”) was astride of a bough which he had got hold of, swinging up and down, and yelling like the rest. Some stood by the edge of the water, for the oak was within a few yards of the New Sea, and alternately made ducks and drakes, and turned to contradict their friends.

On higher ground beyond, a herd of cows grazed in perfect peace, while the swallows threaded a maze in and out between them, but just above the grass. The New Sea was calm and smooth as glass, the sun shone in a cloudless sky, so that the shadow of the oak was pleasant; but the swallows had come

down from the upper air, and Bevis, as he stood a little apart listening in an abstracted manner to the uproar, watched them swiftly gliding in and out. He had convened a council of all those who wanted to join the war in the fields, because it seemed best to keep the matter secret, which could not be done if they came to the house, else perhaps the battle would be interfered with. This oak was chosen as it was known to every one.

It grew alone in the meadow, and far from any path, so that they could talk as they liked. They had hardly met ten minutes when the confusion led to frequent blows and pushes, and the shouting was so great that no one could catch more than disjointed sentences. Mark now came running with the map in his hand; it had been forgotten, and he had been sent to fetch it. As he came near, and they saw him, there was a partial lull.

“What an awful row you have been making,” he said, “I heard it all across the field. Why don’t you choose sides?”

“Who’s to choose?” said Ted, as if he did not know that he should be one of the leaders. He was the tallest and biggest of them all, a head and shoulders above Bevis.

“You, of course,” came in chorus.

“And you needn’t look as if you didn’t want to,” shouted somebody, at which there was a laugh.

“Now, Bevis, Bevis! Sides.” They crowded round, and pulled Bevis into the circle.

“Best two out of three,” said Mark. “Here’s a penny.”

“Lend me one,” said Ted.

Phil handed him the coin.

“You’ll never get it back,” cried one of the crowd. Ted was rather known for borrowing on the score of his superior strength.

“Bevis, you’re dreaming,” as Bevis stood quiet and motionless, still in his far-away mood. “‘Toss.”

Bevis tossed, the penny spun, and he caught it on the back of his hand; Mark nudged him.

“Cry.”

“Head,” said Ted. Mark nudged again; but it was a head. Mark stamped his foot.

“Tail,” and it was a tail; Ted won the toss.

“I told you how to do it,” whispered Mark to Bevis in a fierce whisper, “and you didn’t.”

“Choose,” shouted everybody. Ted beckoned to Val, who came and stood behind him. He was the next biggest, very easy tempered and a favourite, as he would give away anything.

“Choose,” shouted everybody again. It was

Bevis's turn, and of course he took Mark. So far it was all understood, but it was now Ted's turn, and no one knew who he would select. He looked round and called Phil, a stout, short, slow-speaking boy, who had more pocket-money, and was more inclined to books than most of them.

"Who shall I have?" said Bevis aside to Mark.

"Have Bill," said Mark. "He's strong."

Bill was called, and came over. Ted took another—rank and file—and then Bevis, who was waking up, suddenly called "Cecil."

"You stupe," said Mark. "He can't fight."

Cecil, a shy, slender lad, came and stood behind his leader.

"You'll lose everybody," said Mark. "Ted will have all the big ones. There, he's got Tim. Have Fred; I saw him knock George over once."

Fred came, and the choosing continued, each trying to get the best soldiers, till none were left but little Charlie, who was an odd one.

"He's no good," said Ted; "you can put him in your pocket."

"I hate you," said Charlie; "after all the times I've run with messages for you. Bevis, let me come your side."

"Take him," said Ted; "but mind, you'll have

one more if you do, and I shall get some one else."

"Then he'll get a bigger one," said Mark. "Don't have him; he'll only be in the way."

Charlie began to walk off with his head hanging.

"Cry-baby," shouted the soldiery. "Pipe your eye."

"Come here," said Bevis; Charlie ran back delighted.

"Well, you have done it," said Mark in a rage. "Now Ted will have another twice as big. What's the use of my trying when you are so stupid! I never did see. We shall be whopped anyhow."

Quite heedless of these reproaches, Bevis asked Ted who were to be his lieutenants.

"I shall have Val and Phil," said Ted.

"And I shall have Mark and Cecil," said Bevis. "Let us count. How many are there on each side? Mark, write down all ours. Haven't you a pocket-book? well, do it on the back of the map. Ted, you had better do the same."

"Phil," said Ted, who was not much of a student, "you put down the names."

Phil, a reader in a slow way, did as he was bidden. There were fifteen on Bevis's side, and

fourteen on Ted's, who was to choose another to make it even.

"There's the muster-roll," said Mark, holding up the map.

"But how shall we know one another?" said George.

"Who's friends, and who's enemies," said Fred.

"Else we shall all hit one another anyhow," said another.

"Stick feathers in our hats."

"Ribbons round our arms would be best," said Cecil. "Hats may be knocked off."

"Ribbons will do first-rate," said Bevis. "I'll have blue; Ted, you have red. You can buy heaps of ribbon for nothing."

"Phil," said Ted, "have you got any money?"

"Half-a-crown."

"Lend us, then."

"No, I shan't," said Phil: "I'll buy the ribbons myself."

"Let's have a skirmish now," said Bill. "Come on, Val," and he began to whirl his hands about.

"Stop that," said Bevis. "Ted, there's a truce, and if you let your fellows fight it's breaking it. Catch hold of Bill—Mark, Cecil, hold him."

Bill was seized, and hustled round behind the oak, and kept there till he promised to be quiet.

"But when are we going to begin?" asked Jack.

"Be quick," said Luke.

"War! war!" shouted half a dozen, kicking up their heels.

"Hold your noise," said Ted, cuffing one of his followers. "Can't you see we're getting on as fast as we can. Bevis, where are we going to fight?"

"In the Plain," said Bevis. "That's the best place."

"Plenty of room for a big battle," said Ted. "O, you've got it on the map, I see."

The Plain was the great pasture beside the New Sea, where Bevis and Mark bathed and ran about in the sunshine. It was some seventy or eighty acres in extent, a splendid battle-field.

"We're not going to march," said Mark, taking something on himself as lieutenant.

"We're not going to march," said Bevis. "But I did not tell you to say so; I mean we are not going to march the thousand miles, Ted; we will suppose that."

"All right," said Ted.

"But we're going to have camps," continued

Bevis. "You're going to have your camp just outside the hedge towards the hills, because you live that side, and you will come that way. Here,"—he showed Ted a circle drawn on the map to represent a camp,—“that's yours ; and this is ours on this side, towards our house, as we shall come that way.”

“The armies will encamp in sight of each other,” said Phil. “That's quite proper. Go on, Bevis. Shall we send out scouts ? ”

“We shall light fires and have proper camps,” said Bevis.

“And bring our great-coats and cloaks, and a hamper of grub,” interrupted Mark, anxious to show that he knew all about it.

Bevis frowned, but went on. “And I shall send one of my soldiers to be with you, and you will send one of yours to be with me—”

“Whatever for ? ” said Ted. “That's a curious thing.”

“Well, it's to know when to begin. When we are all there, we'll hoist up a flag—a handkerchief will do on a stick—and you will hoist up yours, and then when the war is to begin, you will send back my soldier, and I will send back yours, and they will cross each other as they are running, and when your soldier reaches you, and mine reaches me—”

"I see," said Ted, "I see. Then we are to march out so as to begin quite fair."

"That's it," said Bevis. "So as to begin at the same minute, and not one before the other. I have got it all ready, and you need not have sent people to worry me to make haste about the war."

"Well, how was I to know if you never said anything?" said Ted.

"And who are we to be?" said Val. "Saxons and Normans, or Crusaders, or King Arthur—"

"We're all to be Romans," said Bevis.

"Then it will be the Civil War," said Phil, who had read most history.

"Of course it will," said Bevis, "and I am to be Julius Cæsar, and Ted is to be Pompey."

"I won't be Pompey," said Ted; "Pompey was beat."

"You must," said Bevis.

"I shant."

"But you *must*."

"I won't be beaten."

"I shall beat you easily."

"That you won't," very warmly.

"Indeed I shall," said Bevis quite composedly, "as I am Cæsar I shall beat you very easily."

"Of course we shall," added Mark.

“You won’t; I’ve got the biggest soldiers, and I shall drive you anyhow.”

“No, you won’t.”

“I’ve got Val and Phil and Tim, and I mean to have Ike, so now—”

“There, I told you,” said Mark to Bevis. “He’s got all the biggest, and Ike is a huge big donk of a fellow.”

“It’s no use,” said Bevis, not in the least ruffled; “I shall beat you.”

“Not you,” said Ted, hot and red in the face. “Why I’ll pitch you in the water first.”

“Take you all your time,” said Bevis, shutting his lips tighter and beginning to look a little dangerous.

“Shut up,” said Val.

“Stop,” said Phil and Bill and George, pressing in.

“Hush,” said Cecil. “It’s a truce.”

“Well, I won’t be Pompey,” said Ted sullenly.

“Then we must have somebody who will,” said Bevis sharply, “and choose again.”

“I wouldn’t mind,” said some one in the crowd.

“Nor I,” said another.

“If I was general I wouldn’t mind being Pompey. Let me, Bevis.”

“Who’s that,” said Ted. “If any one says that

I'll smash him." When he found he could so easily be superseded he surrendered. "Well, I'll be Pompey," he said, "but mind I shan't be beat."

"Pompey ought to win if he can," said Val; "that's only fair."

"What's the use of fighting if we are to be beat?" said Phil.

"Of course," said Bevis, "how very stupid you all are! Of course, Ted is to win if he can; he's only to be called Pompey to make it proper. I know I shall beat him, but he's to beat us if he can."

"I'm only to be called Pompey, mind," said Ted; "mind that. We are to win if we can."

"Of course;" and so this delicate point was settled after very nearly leading to an immediate battle.

"Hurrah for Pompey!" shouted George, throwing up his hat.

"Hurrah for Cæsar!" said Bill, hurling up his. This was the signal for a general shouting and uproar. They had been quiet ten minutes, and were obliged to let off their suppressed energy. There was a wild capering round the oak.

"Ted Pompey," said Charlie, little and impudent, "what fun it will be to see you run away!" For which he had his ears pulled till he squealed.

"Now," shouted Mark, "let's get it all done."

Come on.” The noise subsided somewhat, and they gathered round as Ted and Bevis began to talk again.

“Cæsar,” said Phil to Bevis, “if you’re Cæsar and Ted’s Pompey, who are we? We ought to have names too.”

“I’m Mark Antony,” said Mark, standing bolt upright.

“Very well,” said Bevis. “Phil, you can be—let me see, Varro.”

“All right, I’m Varro,” said Phil; “and who’s Val? Oh, I know,”—running names over in his mind,—“he’s Crassus. Val Crassus, do you hear?”

“Capital,” said Crassus. “I’m ready.”

“Then there’s Cecil,” said Mark; “who’s he?”

“Cecil!” said Phil. “Cecil—Cis—Cis—Scipio, of course.”

“First-rate,” said Mark. “Scipio Cecil, that’s your name.”

“Write it down on the roll,” said Bevis. The names were duly registered; Pompey’s lieutenants as Val Crassus and Phil Varro, and Cæsar’s as Mark Antony and Scipio Cecil. After which there was a great flinging of stones into the water and more shouting.

“Let’s see,” said Ted. “If there’s fifteen each

side, there will be five soldiers to each, five for captains, and five for lieutenants."

"Cohorts," said Phil. "A cohort each, hurrah!"

"Do be quiet," said Ted. "How can we go on when you make such a row? Cæsar Bevis, are all the swords ready?"

"No," said Bevis. "We must fix the length, and have them all the same."

They got a stick, and after much discussion cut it to a certain length as a standard; Mark took charge of it, and all the swords were to be cut off by it, and none to be any thicker. There were to be cross-pieces nailed or fastened on, but the ends were to be blunt and not sharp.

"No sticking," said Ted. "Only knocking."

"Only knocking and slashing," said Bevis. "Stabbing won't do, and arrows won't do, nor spears."

"Why not?" said Mark, who had been looking forward to darting his javelin at Ted Pompey.

"Because eyes will get poked out," said Bevis, "and there would be a row. If anybody got stuck and killed, there would be an awful row."

"So there would," said Mark. "How stupid!" Just as if people could not kill one another without so much fuss!

“And no hitting at faces,” said Bevis, “else if somebody’s marked there will be a bother.”

“No,” said Ted. “Mind, no slashing faces. Knock swords together.”

“Knock swords together,” said Bevis. “Make rattling and shout.”

“Shout,” said Mark, bellowing his loudest.

“How shall we know when we’re killed?” said Cecil.

“Well, you *are* a stupe,” said Val. “Really you are.” They all laughed at Cecil.

“But I don’t know,” said Ted Pompey. “You just think, how shall we know who’s beat? Cecil’s not so silly.”

“No more he is,” said Mark. “Bevis, how is it to be managed?”

“Those who run away are beaten,” said Charlie. “You’ll see Ted run fast enough.” Away he scampered himself to escape punishment.

“Of course,” said Bevis. “One way will be if people run away. O! I know, if the camp is taken.”

“Or if the captain is taken prisoner,” said Phil; “and tied up with a cord.”

“Yes,” continued Bevis. “If the captain is taken prisoner, and if the eagles are captured—”

“Eagles,” said Ted Pompey.

“Standards,” said Phil. “That’s right : are we to have proper eagles, Cæsar Bevis ? ”

“Yes,” said Bevis. “Three brass rings round sticks will do. Two eagles each, don’t you see, Ted, like flags, only eagles, that’s proper.”

“Who keeps the ground wins the victory,” said Cecil.

“Right,” said Ted. “I shall soon tie up Bevis—we must bring cords.”

“You must catch him first,” said Mark.

“Captains must be guarded,” said Val. “Strong guards round them and awful fighting there,” licking his lips at the thought of it.

“Captain Cæsar Bevis,” said Tim, who had not spoken before, but had listened very carefully. “Is there to be any punching ? ”

“Hum ! ” Bevis hesitated, and looked at Ted.

“I think so,” said Ted, who had long arms and hard fists.

“If there’s punching,” cried Charlie from the oak, into which he had climbed for safety ; “if there’s punching, only the big blokes can play.”

“No punching,” said Mark eagerly, not that he feared, being stout and sturdy, but seizing at anything to neutralize Ted’s big soldiers.

“No punching,” shouted a dozen at once; “only pushing.”

“Very well,” said Bevis, “no punching, and no tripping—pushing and wrestling quite fair.”

“Wrestling,” said Ted directly. “That will do.”

“Stupid,” said Mark to Bevis; then louder, “Only nice wrestling, no ‘scrumpshing.’”

“No ‘scrumpshing,’” shouted everybody.

Ted stamped his foot, but it was of no use. Everybody was for fair and pleasant fighting.

“Never mind,” said Ted. “We’ll shove you out of the field.”

“Yah! yah!” said Charlie, making faces at him.

“If anybody does what’s agreed shan’t be done,” said Mark, still anxious to stop Ted’s design; “that will lose the battle, even if it’s won.”

“It ought to be all fair,” said Val, who was very big, but straightforward.

“If anything’s done unfair, that counts against whoever does it,” said Cecil.

“No sneaking business,” shouted everybody. “No sneaking and hitting behind.”

“Certainly not,” said Bevis. “All quite fair.”

“Somebody must watch Ted, then,” said Charlie from the oak.

Ted picked up a piece of dead stick and threw it at him. He dodged it like a squirrel.

"If you say such things," said Bevis, very angry, "you shan't fight. Do you hear?"

"Yes," said Charlie, penitent. "I won't any more. But it's true," he whispered to Fred under him.

"Everything's ready now, isn't it?" said Ted.

"Yes, I think so," said Bevis.

"You haven't fixed the day," said Val.

"No, more I have."

"Let's have it to-day," said Fred.

They caught it up and clamoured to have the battle at once.

"The swords are not ready," said Mark.

"Are the eagles ready?" asked Phil.

"Two are," said Mark.

"The other two shall be made this afternoon," said Bevis. "Phil, will you go in to Latten for the blue ribbon for us; here's three shillings."

"Yes," said Phil, "I'll get both at once—blue and red, and bring you the blue."

"To-morrow, then," said Fred. "Let's fight to-morrow."

But they found that three of them were going out to-morrow. So, after some more discussion,

the battle was fixed for the day after, and it was to begin in the evening, as some of them could not come before. The camps were to be made as soon after six o'clock as possible, and, this agreed to, the council broke up, though it was understood that if anything else occurred to any one, or the captains wished to make any alterations, they were to send despatches by special messengers to each other. The swords and eagles for Ted's party were to be fetched the evening before, and smuggled out of window when it was dark, that no one might see them.

“Hurrah!”

So they parted, and the oak was left in silence, with the grass all trampled under it. The cattle fed down towards the water, and the swallows wound in and out around them.

CHAPTER XV.

THE WAR BEGINS.

As they were walking home Mark reproached Bevis with his folly in letting Ted, who was so tall himself, choose almost all the big soldiers.

“It’s no use to hit you, or pinch you, or frown at you, or anything,” grumbled Mark; “you don’t take any more notice than a tree. Now Pompey will beat us hollow.”

“If you say any more,” said Bevis, “I will hit you; and it is you who are the donk. I did not want the big ones. I like lightning-quick people, and I’ve got Cecil, who is as quick as anything—”

“What’s the use of dreaming like a tree when you ought to have your eyes open; and if you’re like that in the battle—”

“I tell you the knights were not the biggest; they very often fought huge people and monsters.

And don't you remember how Ulysses served the giant with one eye?"

"I should like to bore a hole through Ted like that," said Mark. "He's a brute, and Phil's as cunning as ever he can be, and you've been and lost the battle."

"I tell you I've got Cecil, who is as quick as lightning, and all the sharp ones, and if you say any more I won't speak to you again, and I'll have some one else for lieutenant."

Mark nodded his head, and growled to himself, but he did not dare go farther. They worked all the afternoon in the bench-room, cutting off the swords to the same length, and fastening on the cross-pieces. They did not talk, Mark was sulky, and Bevis on his dignity. In the evening Phil came with the ribbons.

Next morning, while they were making two more eagles for Pompey, Val Crassus came to say he thought they ought to have telescopes, as officers had field-glasses; but Bevis said they were not invented in the time of their war. The day was very warm, still, and cloudless, and, after they had fixed the three brass rings on each long rod for standards, Bevis brought the old grey book of ballads out of the parlour into the orchard. Though

he had used it so often he could not find his favourite place quickly, because the pages were not only frayed but some were broader than others, and would not run through the fingers, but adhered together.

When he had found “Kyng Estmere,” he and Mark lay down on the grass under the shadow of a damson-tree, and chanted the verses, reading them first, and then singing them. Presently they came to where:—

“Kyng Estmere threwe the harpe asyde,
And swith he drew his brand;
And Estmere he, and Adler yonge,
Right stiffe in stour can stand.

“And aye their swords soe sore can byte,
Through help of gramaryè,
That soone they have slayne the Kempery men,
Or forst them forth to flee.”

These they repeated twenty times, for their minds were full of battle; and Bevis said after they had done the war they would study gramaryè or magic. Just afterwards Cecil came to ask if they ought not to have bugles, as the Romans had trumpets, and Bevis had a bugle somewhere. Bevis thought it was proper, but it was of no use, for nobody could blow the bugle but the old Bailiff, and he could

only get one long note from it, so dreadful that you had to put your hands to your ears if you stood near. Cecil also said that in his garden at home there was a bay-tree, and ought they not to have wreaths for the victors? Bevis said that was capital, and Cecil went home with orders from Cæsar to get his sisters to make some wreaths of bay for their triumph when they had won the battle.

Soon after sunset that evening the Bailiff looked in, and said there was some sheet lightning in the north, and he was going to call back some of the men to put tarpaulins over two or three loaded waggons, as he thought, after so much dry, hot weather, there would be a great storm. The lightning increased very much, and after it grew dusk the flashes lit up the sky. Before sunset the sky had seemed quite cloudless, but now every flash showed innumerable narrow bands of clouds, very thin, behind which the electricity played to and fro.

While Bevis and Mark were watching it, Bevis's governor came out, and looking up said it would not rain and there was no danger; it was a sky-storm, and the lightning was at least a mile high. But the lightning became very fierce and almost incessant, sometimes crooked like a scimitar of flame, some-

times jagged, sometimes zigzag; and now and then vast acres of violet light, which flooded the ground and showed every tree and leaf and flower, all still and motionless; and after which, though lesser flashes were going on, it seemed for a moment quite dark, so much was the eye overpowered.

Bevis and Mark went up into the bench-room, where it was very close and sultry, and sat by the open window with the swords for Pompey bound up in two bundles and the standards, but they were half afraid no one would come for them. Their shadows were perpetually cast upon the white wall opposite as the flashes came and went. The cross-bow and lance, the boomerang and knobbed clubs were visible, and all the tools on the bench. Now and then, when the violet flashes came, the lightning seemed to linger in the room, to fill it with a blaze and stop there a moment. In the darkness that followed one of these they heard a voice call "Bevis" underneath the window, and saw Phil and Val Crassus, who had come for the swords. Mark lowered the bundles out of window by a cord, but when they had got them they still stood there.

"Why don't you go?" said Mark.

"Lightning," said Val. "It's awful." It really was very powerful. The pears on the wall, and

everything however minute stood out more distinctly defined than in daytime.

“It’s a mile high,” said Bevis. “It won’t hurt you.”

“Ted wouldn’t come,” said Phil. “He’s gone to bed, and covered his head. You don’t know how it looks out in the fields, all by yourself; it’s all very well for you indoors.”

“I’ll come with you,” said Bevis directly; up he jumped and went down to them, followed by Mark.

“Why wouldn’t Ted come?” said Mark.

“He’s afraid,” said Phil, “and so was I till Val said he would come with me. Will lightning come to brass?” The flashes were reflected from the brass rings on the standards.

“I tell you it won’t hurt,” said Bevis, quite sure, because his governor had said so. But when they had walked up the field and were quite away from the house and the trees which partly obstructed the view, he was amazed at the spectacle, for all the meadow was lit up; and in the sky the streamers of flame rose in and out and over each other, till you could not tell which flash was which in the confusion of lightning. Bevis became silent and fell into one of his dream states, when, as Mark said, he was like a tree. He was lost—something seemed to take him out of himself. He walked on, and they went

with him, till he came to the gate opening on the shore of the New Sea.

“O, look !” they all said at once.

All the broad, still water, smooth as glass, shone and gleamed, reflecting back the bright light above ; and far away they saw the wood (where Bevis and Mark once wandered) as plain as at noontide.

“I can’t go home to-night,” said Phil. Val Crassus said he could sleep at his house, which was much nearer ; but he, too, hesitated to start.

“It is awful,” said Mark.

“It’s nothing,” said Bevis. “I like it.” The continuous crackling of the thunder just then deepened, and a boom came rolling down the level water from the wooded hill. Bevis frowned, and held his lips tight together. He was startled, but he would not show it.

“I’ll go with you,” he said ; and though Mark pointed out that they would have to come back by themselves, he insisted. They went with Pompey’s lieutenants till Val’s house, lit up by lightning, was in sight ; then they returned. As they came into the garden, Bevis said the battle ought to be that night, because it would read so well in the history afterwards. The lightning continued far into the night, and still flashed when sleep overcame them.

Next morning Bevis sprang up and ran to the window, afraid it might be wet; but the sun was shining and the wind was blowing tremendously, so that all the willows by the brook looked grey as their leaves were turned, and the great elms by the orchard bowed to the gusts.

“It’s dry,” shouted Bevis, dancing.

“Hurrah!” said Mark, and they sang,—

“Kyng Estmere threwe his harpe asyde,
And swith he drew his brand.”

This was the day of the great battle, and they were impatient for the evening.

There was a letter on the breakfast-table from Bevis’s grandpa, enclosing a P.O.O., a present of a sovereign for him. He asked the governor to advance him the money in two half-sovereigns. The governor did so, and Bevis immediately handed one of them to Mark.

About dinner-time there came a special messenger from Pompey with a letter, which was in Pompey’s name, but Phil’s handwriting. “Ted Pompey to Cæsar Bevis. Please tell me who you are going to send to be with me in my camp, and let him come to the stile in Barn Copse at half-past five, and I will send Tim to be with you till the white handker-

chiefs are up. And tell me if the lieutenants are to carry the eagles, or some one else."

Bevis wrote back :—" Cæsar to Pompey greeting,"—this style he copied from his books,—
" Cæsar will send Charlie to be with you, as he can run quick, though he is little. The lieutenants are not to carry the eagles, but a soldier for them. And Cæsar wishes you health."

Then in the afternoon Mark had to go and tell Cecil and others, who were to send on the message to the rest of their party, to meet Bevis at the gate by the New Sea at half-past five, and to mind and not be one moment later. While Mark was gone, Bevis roamed about the garden and orchard, and back again to the stable and sheds, and then into the rick-yard, which was strewn with twigs and branches torn off from the elms that creaked as the gale struck them; then indoors, and from room to room. He could not rest anywhere, he was so impatient.

At last he picked up the little book of the *Odyssey*, with its broken binding and frayed margin, from the chair where he had last left it; and taking it up into the bench-room, opened it at the twenty-second book, where his favourite hero wreaked his vengeance on the suitors. With his own bow in his

right hand, and the book in his left, Bevis read, marching up and down the room, stamping and shouting aloud as he came to the passages he liked best:—

“Swift as the word, the parting arrow sings,
And bears thy fate, Antinous, on its wings !
* * * * *

“For fate who fear’d amidst a feastful band ?
And fate to numbers by a single hand ?
* * * * *

“Two hundred oxen every prince shall pay ;
The waste of years refunded in a day.
Till then thy wrath is just,—Ulysses burn’d
With high disdain, and sternly thus return’d.
* * * * *

“Soon as his store of flying fates was spent,
Against the wall he set the bow unbent ;
And now his shoulders bear the massy shield,
And now his hands two beamy javelins wield.”

Bevis had dropped his bow and seized one of Mark’s spears, not hearing, as he stamped and shouted, Mark coming up the stairs. Mark snatched up one of the swords, and as Bevis turned they rattled their weapons together, and shouted in their fierce joy. When satisfied they stopped, and Mark said he had come by the New Sea, and the waves were the biggest he had ever seen there, the wind was so furious.

They had their tea, or rather they sat at table,

and rushed off as soon as possible; who cared for eating when war was about to begin! Seizing an opportunity, as the coast was clear, Mark ran up the field with the eagles, which, having long handles, were difficult to hide. Cecil and Bill took the great-coat, and a railway-rug, which Bevis meant to represent his general's cloak. He followed with the basket of provisions on his shoulder, and was just thinking how lucky they were to get off without any inquiries, when he found they had forgotten the matches to light the camp-fire. He came back, took a box, and was going out again when he met Polly the dairymaid.

"What are you doing now?" said she. "Don't spoil that basket with your tricks—we use it. What's in it?" putting her hand on the lid.

"Only bread-and-butter and ham, and summer apples. It's a picnic."

"A picnic. What's that ribbon for?" Bevis wore the blue ribbon round his arm.

"O! that's nothing."

"I've half a mind to tell—I don't believe you're up to anything good."

"Pooh! don't be a donk," said Bevis. "I'll give you a long piece of this ribbon when I come back."

Off he went, having bribed Scylla, but he met Charybdis in the gateway, where he came plump on the Bailiff.

“What’s up now?” he gruffly inquired.

“Picnic.”

“Mind you don’t go bathing; the waves be as big as cows.”

“Bathing,” said Bevis, with intense contempt. “We don’t bathe in the evening. Here, you—” donk, he was going to say, but forebore; he gave the Bailiff a summer apple, and went on. The Bailiff bit the apple, muttered to himself about “mischief,” and walked towards the rick-yard. In a minute Mark came to meet Bevis.

“You did him?” he said.

“Yes,” said Bevis, “and Polly too.”

“Hurrah!” shouted Mark. “They’re all there but one, and he’s coming in five minutes.”

Bevis found his army assembled by the gate leading to the New Sea. Each soldier wore a blue ribbon round the left arm for distinction; Tim, who had been sent by Pompey to be with them till all was ready, wore a red one.

“Two and two,” said Cæsar Bevis, taking his sword and instantly assuming a general’s authoritative tone. He marshalled them in double file, one eagle

in front, one halfway down, where his second lieutenant, Scipio Cecil, stood; the basket carried in the rear as baggage. Cæsar and Mark Antony stood in front side by side.

“March,” said Bevis, starting, and they followed him.

The route was beside the shore, and so soon as they left the shelter of the trees the wind seemed to hit them a furious blow, which pushed them out of order for a moment. The farther they went the harder the wind blew, and flecks of brown foam, like yeast, came up and caught against them. Rolling in the same direction as they were marching, the waves at each undulation increased in size, and when they came to the bluff Bevis walked slowly a minute, to look at the dark hollows and the ridges from whose crests the foam was driven.

But here leaving the shore he led the army, with their brazen eagles gleaming in the sun, up the slope of the meadow where the solitary oak stood, and so beside the hedge-row till they reached the higher ground. The Plain, the chosen battle-field, was on the other side of the hedge, and it had been arranged that the camps should be pitched just without the actual campaigning-ground. On this elevated place the gale came along with even greater

fury; and Mark Antony said that they would never be able to light a camp-fire that side, they must get through and into shelter.

“I shall do as I said,” shouted Bevis, scarcely audible, for the wind blew the words down his throat. But he kept on till he found a hawthorn bush, with brambles about the base, a detached thicket two or three yards from the hedge, and near which there was a gap. He stopped, and ordered the standard-bearer behind him to pitch the eagle there. The army halted, the eagles were pitched by thrusting the other end of the rods into the sward, the cloaks, coats, and rug thrown together in a heap, and the soldiers set to work to gather sticks for the fire. Of these they found plenty in the hedge, and piled them up in the shelter of the detached thicket.

Bevis, Mark Antony, and Scipio Cecil went through the gap to reconnoitre the enemy. They immediately saw the smoke of his camp-fire rising on the other side of the Plain, close to a gateway. The smoke only rose a little above the hedge there—the fire was on the other side—and was then blown away by the wind. None of Pompey’s forces were visible.

“Ted, I mean Pompey, was here first,” said Mark Antony. “He’ll be ready before us.”

“Be quick with the fire,” shouted Cæsar.

“Look,” said Scipio Cecil. “There’s the punt.”

Behind the stony promontory at the quarry they could see the punt from the high ground where they stood ; it was partly drawn ashore just inside Fir-Tree Gulf, so that the projecting point protected it like a breakwater. The old man (the watcher) had started for the quarry to get a load of sand as usual, never thinking, as how should he think ? that the gale was so furious. But he found himself driven along anyhow, and unable to row back ; all he could do was to steer and struggle into the gulf, and so behind the Point, where he beached his unwieldy vessel. Too much shaken to dig sand that day, and knowing that he could not row back, he hid his spade and the oars, and made for home on foot. But the journey by land was more dangerous than that by sea, for he insensibly wandered into the high road, and came to an anchor in the first inn, where, relating his adventures on the deep with the assistance of ardent liquor, he remained.

Bevis, who had gone to light the fire with the matches in his pocket, now returned through the gap, and asked if anything had been seen of Pompey’s men. As he spoke a Pompeian appeared, and mounting the spars of the distant gate displayed

a standard, to which was attached a white handkerchief, which fluttered in the breeze.

“They’re ready,” said Mark Antony. “Come on. Which way shall we march? Which way are you going?”

The smoke of Cæsar’s fire rose over the hedge, and swept down by the gale trailed along the ground towards Pompey’s. Bevis hastened back to the camp, and tied his handkerchief to the top of an eagle, Mark followed. “Which way are you going?” he repeated. “Where shall we meet them? What are you going to do?”

“I don’t know,” said Cæsar, angrily pushing him. “Get away.”

“There,” growled Mark Antony to Scipio, “he doesn’t know what he’s going to do, and Phil is as cunning as—”

The standard-bearer sent by Cæsar pushed by him, got through the gap, and held up the white flag, waving it to attract more attention. In half a minute, Pompey’s flag was hauled down, and directly afterwards some one climbed over the gate and set out running towards them. It was Charlie.

“Run, Tim,” said Cæsar Bevis; “we’re ready.”

Tim dashed through the gap, and set off with all his might.

“Two and two,” shouted Cæsar. “Stand still, will you?” as they moved towards the opening. “Take down that flag.”

The eagle-bearer resumed his place behind him. Cæsar signing to the legions to remain where they were, went forward and stood on the mound. He watched the runners and saw them pass each other nearly about the middle of the great field, for though little, Charlie was swift of foot, and full of the energy which is more effective than size.

“Let’s go.”

“Now then.”

“Start.”

The legions were impatient and stamped their feet, but Cæsar would not move. In a minute or two Charlie reached him, red and panting with running.

“Now,” shouted Bevis, “march!” and he leaped into the field; Charlie came next for he would not wait to take his place in the ranks. The legions rushed through anyhow, eager to begin the fray.

“Two and two,” shouted Cæsar, who would have no disorder.

“Two and two,” repeated his first lieutenant, Mark Antony.

“Two and two,” said Scipio Cecil, punching his men into place.

On they went, with Cæsar leading, straight across the wind-swept plain for Pompey’s camp. The black swifts flew about them, but just clearing the grass, and passing so close as to seem almost under foot. There were hundreds of them, they come down from the upper air, and congregate in a great gale; they glided over the field in endless turns and windings. Steadily marching, the army had now advanced a third part of the way across the field.

“Where’s Pompey?” said Scipio Cecil.

“Where shall we meet and fight?” said Mark Antony.

“Silence,” shouted Bevis, “or I’ll degrade you from your rank, and you shan’t be officers.”

They were silent, but every one was looking for Pompey and thinking just the same. There was the gate in full view now, and the smoke of Pompey’s camp, but none of the enemy were visible. Bevis was thinking and trying to make out whether Pompey was waiting by his camp, or whether he had gone round behind the hedge, and if so, which way, to the right towards the quarry, or to the left towards the copse, but he could not decide, having nothing to guide him.

But though uncertain in his own mind, he was general enough not to let the army suppose him in doubt. He strode on in silence, but keeping the sharpest watch, till they came to the waggon-track, crossing the field from left to right. It had worn a gully or hollow way leading down to the right to the hazel hedge, where there was a gate. They came to the edge of the hollow way, where there were three thick hawthorn bushes and two small ash-trees.

“Halt!” said Cæsar Bevis, as the bushes partly concealed them from view. “Stay here. Let no one move.”

Bevis himself went round the trees and looked again, but he could see nothing: Pompey and his army were nowhere in sight. He could not tell what to do, and returned slowly, thinking, when looking down the hollow way an idea struck him.

“Scipio, take your men”—(“Cohort,” said Antony)—“take your cohort, jump into the road, and go down to the gate there. Keep out of sight—stoop: slip through the gate, and go up inside the hedge, dart round the corner and seize Ted’s camp. Quick! And mind, if they’re all there, of course you’re not to fight, but come back. Now—quick.”

Scipio Cecil jumped into the hollow way followed

by his five soldiers, and stooping so as to be hidden by the bank, ran towards the gate in the hazel hedge. They watched him till the cohort had got through the gate.

“Now what shall we do?” said Mark Antony.

“How can I tell what to do when Pompey isn’t anywhere?” said Bevis, in a rage.

“Put me up a tree,” said Charlie, “perhaps I could see.”

“You’ve no business to speak,” said Bevis; but he used the idea, and told two of them to “bunt” (shove) Charlie up one of the ash-trees till he could grasp a branch. Then Charlie, agile as a squirrel, was up in a minute.

“There’s no one in their camp,” he shouted down. “Cecil’s rushing on it. Pompey, O! I can see him.”

“Where?”

“There by the copse,” pointing to the left and partly behind them.

“Which way is he going?” asked Bevis.

“That way,”—to the left.

“Our camp,” said Mark.

“That’s it,” said Bevis. “Come down, quick. Turn to the left” (to the army). “No, stop. Charlie, how many are there with Pompey?”

“Six, ten—oh, I can’t count: I believe it’s all. I can’t see any anywhere else.”

“Quick!” shouted Bevis, turning his legions to the left. “Quick march! Run!”

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BATTLE OF PHARSALIA.

THEY left Charlie to get down how he could, and started at a sharp pace to meet and intercept Pompey. Now, if Pompey had continued his course behind the hedge all the way, he must have got to Cæsar's camp first ; as Cæsar could not crush through the hedge. But when Pompey came to the gate, from which the waggon track issued into the field, he saw that he could make a short cut thence to the gap by Cæsar's camp, instead of marching round the irregular curve of the hedge. Cæsar, though running fast to meet him, was at that moment passing a depression in the ground, and was out of sight. Pompey seized so favourable an opportunity, came through the gate, and ordering " Quick march ! " ran towards the gap. When Cæsar came up out of the depression he saw Pompey's whole army running with their backs

almost turned away from him towards the gap by the camp. They seemed to flee, and Cæsar's legions beholding their enemies' backs, raised a shout. Pompey heard, and looking round, saw Cæsar charging towards his rear. He halted and faced about, and at the same time saw that his own camp was in Cæsar's possession; for there was an eagle at the gate there, and his baggage was being pitched over. Nothing daunted, Pompey ordered his soldiers to advance, and pushed them with his own hands into line, placing Crassus and Varro, one at either end.

As he came running, Cæsar saw that the whole of Pompey's army was before them, while he had but two-thirds of his, and regretted now that he had so hastily detached Scipio's cohort. But waving his sword, he ran at the head of his men, keeping them in column. They were but a hundred yards apart, when Pompey faced about, and so short a distance was rapidly traversed.

Cæsar's sword was the first to descend with a crash upon an enemy's weapon, but Antony was hardly a second later, and before they could lift to strike again, the legion behind, with a shout, pushed them by its impetus right through Pompey's line.

When Cæsar Bevis stopped running, and looked round, there was a break in the enemy's army, which was divided into two parts. Bevis instantly made at the part on his left (where Phil Varro commanded), thinking, instinctively, to crush this half with all his soldiers. But as they did not know what his object was, for he had no time even to give an order, only four or five followed him. The rest paused and faced Val Crassus; and these Ted Pompey and six or seven of his men at once attacked.

Bevis met Phil Varro, and crossed swords with him. Clatter! crash! snap! thump! bang! They slashed and warded: Bevis's shoulder was stung with a sharp blow. He struck back, and his sword sliding down Varro's, broke the cross-piece, and rapped his fingers smartly. Before Varro could hit again, two others, fighting, stumbled across and interrupted the combat.

"Keep together! Keep together!" shouted Phil Varro. "Ted—Pompey, Pompey! Keep together!"

Slash! swish! crash! thump! "Hit him! Now then! He's down! Hurrah!" Crash! Crack—a sword split and flew in splinters.

"Follow Bevis!" shouted Mark. "Stick to

Bevis! Fred! Bill! Quick!" He had privately arranged with these two, Fred and Bill, who were the biggest on their side, that all three should keep close to Bevis and form a guard. Mark was very shrewd, and he guessed that Ted Pompey, being so much stronger and well-supported with stout soldiers, would make every effort to seize Cæsar, who was slightly built, and bind him prisoner. He did not tell Bevis that he had arranged this, for Bevis was a stickler for his imperial authority, and if Mark had told him, would be quite likely to countermand it.

Whirling his sword with terrible fury, Cæsar Bevis had cut his way through all between. Slight as he was, the intense energy within him carried him through the ranks. He struck a sword from one; overthrew another rushing against him; sent a third on his knees, and reaching Phil, hit him on the arm so heavy a blow that, for a moment, he could not use his weapon, but gave way and got behind his men.

"Hurrah!" shouted Mark. "Follow Bevis! Stick to Bevis!"

"Here I am," said Bill, the young giant hitting at Varro.

"So am I," said Fred, the other giant, and

slashing Varro on the side. Varro turned aside to defend himself, when Mark Antony rushed at and overturned him thump on the sward.

“Hurrah ! Down they go !” Such a tremendous shout arose in another direction, that Cæsar Bevis, Mark, and the rest, turned fresh from their own victory to see their companions thrashed.

“Over with them !”

Ted Pompey, Val Crassus, and the other half of the divided line had attacked the remainder of the legion, which paused, and did not follow Cæsar. Separated from Bevis, they fought well, and struggled hard to regain him ; and, while they could keep their assailants at sword’s-length, maintained the battle. But Varro’s shout, “Keep together ! Keep together ! Pompey ! Keep together !” reminded Ted of what Phil Varro had taught him, and, signing to Crassus and his men to do the same, he crossed his arms, held his head low, and, with Crassus and the rest, charged, like bulls with eyes closed, disregarding the savage chops and blows he received. The manœuvre was perfectly successful ; their weight sent them right over Cæsar’s men, who rolled on the ground in all directions.

“There !” said Mark, “what did I tell you ?”

“Come on !” shouted Cæsar Bevis, and he ran

to assist the fallen. He fell on Crassus, who chanced to be nearest, with such violence that Val gave way, when Bevis left him to attack Ted. Ted Pompey, nothing loth, lifted his sword and stepped to meet him.

“Bill! Fred!” shouted Mark; and these three, hustling before Cæsar Bevis, charged under Pompey’s sword, for he could not hit three ways at once; and, thump, he measured his length on the grass.

“Cords!—Ropes!” shouted Mark. “Bill—the rope. Hold him down, Fred! O! You awful stupe! O!”

He stood stock-still, mouth agape; for Bevis, pushing Fred aside as he was going to kneel on Ted as men kneel on a fallen horse’s head, seized Ted by the arm and helped him up.

“Three to one’s not fair,” he said. “Ted, get your sword and fight *Me*.”

Ted looked round for his sword, which had rolled a yard or two. At the same moment Varro, having got on his feet again, rushed up and struck Cæsar a sharp blow on his left arm. He turned, Varro struck again, but Fred guarded it off on his sword. Three soldiers, with Varro, surrounded Fred and Bevis, and, for the moment, they could do nothing but fence off the blows. Ted Pompey having found

his sword, ran to aid Varro, when Mark hit him : he turned to strike at Mark, but a body of soldiers, with George and Tim at their head, rushed by, fighting with others, and bore Mark and Ted before them bodily. In a second all was confusion. On both sides the leaders were separated from their troops, the battle spread out, covering forty yards or more, and twenty individual combats raged at once. All the green declivity was covered with scattered parties, and no one knew which had the better.

“Keep together! Keep together!” shouted Varro, as he struck and rushed to and fro. “I tell you, keep together! Ted! Ted! Pompey! Keep together!”

Swish! slash! clatter! thump! Hurrah! “He’s down!” “Quick!” “You’ve got it!” “Take that!” Slash! But the slain arose again and renewed the fight.

Shrewd Mark Antony having knocked his man over, paused on the higher part of the slope where he chanced to be, and looked down on the battle. He noted Phil Varro go up to Pompey and urge something. Pompey seemed to yield, and shouted, “A tail! a tail! Crassus! George! Tim! A tail!”

Mark dashed down the slope to Bevis, who was fighting on the level ground. He hastened to save the battle, for a "tail" is a terrible thing. The leader, who must be the biggest, gets in front, the next biggest behind him, a third behind him, and so on to the last, forming a tail, which is in fact a column, and so long as it keeps formation will bore a hole through a crowd. Before he could get to Cæsar, for so many struck at him in passing that it took him some time to pass fifty yards, the tail was made—Pompey in front, next Val Crassus, then Varro, then Ike (a big fellow, but who had as yet done nothing, and was no good except for the weight of his body), then George, then Tim, and two more. Eight of them in a mighty line, which began to descend the slope.

"Look!" said Mark Antony at last, touching Cæsar Bevis, "look there! It's a tail!"

"It doesn't matter," said Bevis, looking up.

"Doesn't matter! Why, they'll *hunt* us!"

And Pompey did hunt them, downright hunt them along. Before Fred and Bill could come at Mark's call, before they could shake themselves free of their immediate opponents, Pompey came thundering down, and swept everything before him.

“ Out of the way ! ” cried Mark. “ Bevis, out of the way ! O ! Now ! ” He wrung his hands and stamped.

Bevis stood and received the charge which Pompey led straight at him. Pompey, with his head down and arms crossed to defend it, ran with all his might. Bevis, never stirring, lifted his sword. There was a part of Pompey’s bare head which his arms did not cover. It was a temptation, but he remembered the agreement, and he struck with all his strength on Pompey’s left arm. So hard was the blow that the tough sword snapped, and Pompey groaned with pain, but in the same instant Cæsar felt as if an oak or a mountain had fallen on him. He was hurled to the ground with stunning force, and the column passed over him, one stepping on his foot.

There he lay for half a minute, dazed, and they might easily have taken him prisoner, but they could not stop their rush till they had gone twenty or thirty yards. By that time, Mark, Fred, and Bill had dragged Bevis up, and put a sword which they snatched from a soldier into his hand. He limped, and looked pale and wild for a minute, but his blood was up, and he wanted to renew the fight. They would not let him, they pulled him along.

“It’s no use,” said Mark; “you can’t. We must get to the trees. Here, lean on me. Run. Sycamores! Sycamores!” he shouted.

“Sycamores! trees!” shouted Fred and Bill to their scattered followers. They urged Cæsar to run, he limped, but kept pace with them somehow. Pompey had turned by now, and went through a small body of Cæsar’s men, who had rushed towards him when they saw he was down, just as if they had been straws. Still they checked the column a little, as floating beams check heavy waves, and so gave Cæsar time to get more ahead.

“Sycamores!” Mark continued to shout as he ran, and the broken legions easily understood they were to rally there. At that moment the battle was indeed lost. Pompey ranged triumphant. Leading his irresistible and victorious column with shouting, he chased the flying Cæsar.

Little Charlie, left in the ash-tree, could not get down, but saw the whole of the encounter. The lowest bough was too high to drop from, the trunk too large to clasp and slide down. He was imprisoned and helpless, with the war in sight. He chafed and raged and shouted, till the tears of vexation rolled down his cheeks. Full of fiery spirit it was torture to him to see the battle in which he

could not take part. For awhile, watching the first shock, he forgot everything else in the interest of the fight; but presently, when the combatants separated, and were strewn as it were over the slope, he saw how easily at that juncture any united body could have swept the field, and remembered Scipio Cecil. Why did not Cecil come?

He looked that way, and from his elevation could see Cecil standing on the gate by Pompey's camp. Having sacked the camp, put the fire out, and thrown all the coats over the gate into a heap in the field, Scipio did not know what next he ought to do, and wondered that no orders reached him from Cæsar. He got up on the highest bar except one of the gate, but could see no one, the undulations of the ground completely concealing the site of the conflict. He did not know what to do; he waited a while and looked again. Once he fancied he heard shouting, but the gale was so strong he could not be certain.

Charlie in the ash-tree now seeing Pompey form the tail, or column, worked himself into a state of frenzy. He yelled, he screamed to Scipio to come, till he was hoarse, and gasped with the straining of his throat; but the howling of the tremendous wind through the trees by the gate, prevented Scipio

from hearing a word. Had he known Charlie was in the tree he might have guessed there was something wrong from his frantic gestures, but he did not, and as there were so many scattered trees in the field, there was nothing to make him look at that one in particular. Charlie waved his hat, and at last flung it up into the air, waved his handkerchief—all in vain.

He could see the crisis, but could not convey a knowledge of it to the idle cohort. He looked again at the battle. Cæsar was down and trampled under foot. He threw up his arms, and almost lost his balance in his excitement. The next minute Cæsar was up, and he and his lieutenant were flying from Pompey. The column chased them, and the whole scene—the flight and the pursuit—passed within a short distance, half a stone's throw of the ash-tree.

Quite wild, and lost to everything but his anger, Charlie the next second was out on a bough, clinging to it like a cat. He crawled out some way, till the bough bent a little with his weight. His design was to get out till it bowed towards the ground, and so lowered him—a perilous feat! He got half a yard further, and then swung under it, out and out, till the branch gave a good way. He tried

again, and looked down; the ground was still far below. He heard a shout, it stimulated him. He worked out farther, till the branch cracked loudly; it would break, but would not bend much farther. His feet hung down now; he only held by his hands. Crack! Another shout! He looked down wildly, and in that instant saw a little white knob—a button mushroom in the grass. He left hold, and dropped. The little mushroom saved him, for it guided him, steadied his drop; his feet struck it and smashed it, and his knees giving under him, down he came.

But he was not hurt, his feet, as he hung from the bowed branch, were much nearer the earth than it had looked to him from his original perch, and he alighted naturally. The shock dazed him at first, just as Bevis had been confused, a few minutes previously. In a minute he was all right, and running with all his speed towards Scipio.

As Cæsar ran, with the shout of victorious Pompey close behind, he said, “If we could charge the column sideways we could break it—”

“If,” snorted Mark, with the contempt of desperation; “if—of course!”

Cæsar was right, but he had not got the means just then. Next minute they reached the first syc-

more, not ten yards in front of Pompey. As they turned to face the enemy, with their backs to the great tree, Pompey lowered his head, crossed his arms, and the column charged. Nothing could stop that onslaught, which must have crushed them, but Bevis, quick as thought, pushed Mark and Fred one way and Bill the other, stepping after the latter. Ted Pompey, with his eyes shut, and all the force of his men thrusting behind, crashed against the tree.

Down he went recoiling, and two or three more behind him.

Thwack ! thwack ! The four defenders hammered their enemies before they could recover the shock.

“Quick !” cried Mark ; “tie him—prisoner—quick,” pulling a cord from his pocket, and putting his foot on Ted, who was lying in a heap.

Before any one could help Mark the heap heaved itself up, and Val Crassus and Phil Varro hauled their half-stunned leader back out of reach.

Crash ! clatter ! bang ! thwack !

“Backs to trees ! Stand with backs to trees !” shouted Bevis, hitting out furiously. “We shall win ! Here, Bill !”

They planted themselves, these four, Bevis, Mark, Fred, and Bill, with their backs to the great trunk

of the sycamore, standing a foot or two in front of it for room to swing their swords, and a little way apart for the same reason. The sycamore formed a bulwark so that none could attack them in rear.

The column, as it recoiled, widened out, and came on again in a semi-circle, surrounding them.

“Give in!” shouted Val. “We’re ten to one!” (that was not numerically correct.) “Give in! You’ll all be prisoners in a minute!”

“That we shan’t,” said Bill, fetching him a sideway slash.

“If we could only get Scipio up,” said Mark. “Where is he? Can’t we get him?”

“I forgot him,” said Bevis. “There, take that,” as he warded a cut and returned it. “I forgot him. Look out, Fred, that’s it. Hurrah! Mark,” as Mark made a successful cut. “How stupid.” In the heat and constant changes of the combat they had totally forgotten Cecil and his cohort.

“Why, we’ve been fighting two to three,” said Bill, “and they haven’t done us yet.”

“But we mean to,” said Tim, and Bill shrank involuntarily under an unexpected knock.

“Some more of you—there,” shouted Ted Pompey, as he came to himself, and saw a number of his soldiers in the rear watching the combat. “You,”—

in a rage,—“you go round behind and worry them there; and some of you get up in the tree and hit down.”

“O! botheration!” said Mark, as he heard the last order.

“We *must* get Cecil somehow,” said Bevis.

“Now then,” yelled Ted Pompey, stamping in terrible fury, “do as I tell you; go round the tree, and ‘bunt’ somebody up into it!”

He passed his hand across his bruised forehead, wiping off a fragment of bark which adhered indented in the skin, and rushed into the fight. Ted fought that day like a hero; twice severely punished, he returned to the war with increased determination. He was nervous at lightning, but he feared no mortal being. He was as brave as brave could be. These heavy knocks seemed only to touch him on the quick and arouse a stronger will. When he came in the combat became tremendous.

Like knights with their backs to the tree, the four received them. The swords crossed and rattled, and for two or three minutes nothing else was heard; they were too busy to shout. The eight of the column would have succeeded better had not so many of the others pressed in to get a safe knock at Bevis, hitting from behind the bigger ones so as to

be themselves in safety. These impeded Val and Phil and the first line.

One and all struck at Bevis. The dust flew from his coat, his shoulders smarted, his arms were sore, his left arm, which he used as a guard like a shield, almost numb with knocks.

His face grew pale with anger. He frowned and set his lips tight together, his eyes gleamed. The hail of blows descended on him, and though his wrist began to weary, he could not repay one-tenth of that they gave him.

“Give in! Give in!” shouted Val, who was in front of him, and he put his left hand on Bevis’s shoulder. With a twist of his wrist Bevis hit his right hand so sharp a knock that the sword flew out of it, and for a second Val was daunted.

“Give in! give in!” shouted Phil, pushing to Val’s assistance. “You’re done! It’s no good. You can’t help it. Hurrah!”

Two soldiers appeared in the fork of the tree above. Though so huge the trunk was short, and they began to strike down on Mark, who was forced to stand out so far from the tree that he was in great danger of being seized, and would have been, had they not been so bent on Bevis.

Bevis breathed hard and panted. So thick came

the hail that he could do nothing. If he lifted his sword it was beaten down, if he struck, ten knocks came for one. He received his punishment in silence. Tim had the cord to bind him ready: they made a noose to throw over his head.

“Stick to Bevis,” shouted Mark. “Bevis—Bevis—stick to Bevis—Fred—ah!”—a smart knock made him grind his teeth, and four or five assailants rushing in separated him from Cæsar.

Bevis was beaten on his knee. He crouched, his left side against the tree with his left hand against it, hitting wild and savage, and still keeping a short clear space with his sword.

“Stop!” cried Val, himself desisting. “That’s enough. Stop! stop! Don’t hit him! He’s done. We’ve got him! Now, Phil.”

Phil and Tim rushed in with the noose: Bevis sprang up, drove his head into Phil and sent him whirling with Tim under. Bevis made good use of the moment’s breathing time he thus obtained, punishing three of his hardest thrashers.

“Keep together,” shouted Phil as he got up on his knees. “If Ted would only do as I said. Hurrah!”

They had hammered Bevis by sheer dint of knocks down on his knees again. Fred and Bill in vain

tried to get to him; they were attacked front and rear: Mark quite beside himself with rage, pushed, wrestled, and struck, but they encompassed him like bees. Bevis could hit no more; he warded as well as he could, he could not return.

“Shame! shame!” cried Val, pulling two back, one with each hand. “Don’t hit him! He’s down!”

“Why doesn’t he give in, then?” said Phil, black as thunder.

Ted Pompey, who had watched this scene for a moment without moving, smiled grimly as he saw Bevis could not hit.

“Now,” said he, “Phil, Tim, George—Val’s too soft. Come on—keep close—in we go and have him. Hurrah! Hang it! I say!”

“Whoop!”

LONDON:
PRINTED BY GILBERT AND RIVINGTON, LIMITED,
ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.







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